

# **VULNERABLE BODIES AND GENDERED *HABITUS*: THE PROSPECTS FOR TRANSFORMING EXERCISE**

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## Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Michele Ruyters

**(13<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY, 2012)**

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(13<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY, 2012)

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## CONTENTS

<b>SUMMARY</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 THEORISING THE GENDERED BODY</b>	<b>14</b>
Sex role socialisation	16
Identity Theories	19
Embodied identity	23
Bourdieu and the practice-habitus-capital-field complex	24
Practice	25
Field	26
Habitus	27
Capital	31
Practice, habitus, field, capital, and gender	34
Capital and gender	38
Gendered field	39
Conclusion	41
<b>CHAPTER 2 WOMEN'S EMBODIED EXPERIENCE</b>	<b>42</b>
Sex versus Gender	43
"I can't"	50
Embodied practices	53
School sports as 'gendered' fields	57
'Almost as good as a boy'	60
Conclusion	61
<b>CHAPTER 3 THROWING LIKE A GIRL: GENDERED HABITUS AND THE PROBLEM OF CHANGE</b>	<b>63</b>
<i>Habitus</i> , reflexivity, and change	66

The problem of changing <i>habitus</i>	72
The possibilities for transformation	75
The ‘conditionings of training and exercise’	77
Self-efficacy theory and the potential for transformation	82
The transformative potential of self-defence training	87
Conclusion	91
<b>CHAPTER 4 THINKING ABOUT METHOD</b>	<b>93</b>
Paradigmatic decisions	94
Constructivist inquiry and naturalistic study	96
Axioms of constructivist inquiry	102
Addressing the tensions between Constructivism and Bourdieu’s reflexive sociology	104
Research design: a naturalistic study	113
Inductive data analysis: constant comparative method	127
The soundness of the research - qualitative criteria	132
Quality criteria adopted in this study	134
Ethics and informed consent	141
Format of a Naturalistic Study	144
Conclusion	144
<b>CHAPTER 5 GENDERED BODIES</b>	<b>147</b>
The gendered <i>habitus</i>	148
Gendered sporting fields	151
Gendered sporting practice	157
Durable dispositions	162
<b>CHAPTER 6 VULNERABLE BODIES</b>	<b>164</b>
Self-fulfilling prophecy: the limits and frustrations of gendered <i>habitus</i>	166
Vulnerable <i>habitus</i>	168
Precautionary behaviours	173
Fighting like a girl	175

The gendered disposition of caring	181
Conclusion	184
<b>CHAPTER 7 TRANSFORMING HABITUS</b>	<b>187</b>
Pedagogic practices	189
The transformative potential of self-defence training	194
The disposition to confidence	199
Ephemeral practice	202
New practices versus old habits	205
Self-defence training as a transformative force	207
Conclusion	211
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>214</b>
Gendered Habitus	214
Embodiment of identity	215
The potential for transformation	215
Contribution of research	216
Limitations and suggestions for future research	216
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>218</b>
Articles/Books/Reports/Theses	218
Reports	276

## **Lists of diagrams and tables**

Figure 4.1: Relativism and the constructivist paradigm	99
Figure 4.2 Process of observation and interviewing at School A	118
Figure 4.3 Process of observation and interviewing at School B	119
Table 4.1 Compliance with axioms of the constructivist paradigm	102
Table 4.2 Compliance with entry conditions for a naturalistic study	113
Table 4.3 Structure of the two self-defence courses	116
Table 4.4 Trustworthiness criteria	133

## **Lists of Appendices**

Appendix A Self-defence course structure at School A

Appendix B Sample classes from School B

Appendix C Journal Extract

Appendix D Interview guide



## Summary

My thesis is a contribution to research on the embodiment of identity. Using the work of Pierre Bourdieu, in particular his concepts of *habitus* and practice, I explored women's embodiment of their identity, in particular, aspects of their identity that relate to feelings of weakness and vulnerability in physical contexts. Women may be at risk if they respond in these ways to threats of assault and harassment. My focus was the possibility that women can transform these aspects of their identity through the pedagogic practice of self-defence training. I drew on Bandura's work on self-efficacy and my research in two Victorian secondary girls schools where I observed the delivery of two self-defence training courses including one in which I was also an instructor. I interviewed 30 students as well as one member of the teaching staff. The pedagogic approaches of the two courses were different. The course at School A focused on simulated assaults and striking practice on targets. The course at School B focused on a wide range of self-defence techniques but did not include simulations or striking practice. I explored how girls embody their identities, including girls' perceptions of their physical capabilities, and the kinds of self-protective behaviours they engage in to compensate for feelings of vulnerability and weakness. I found that many of the young women in my research had acquired an understanding of their bodies as relatively weak and vulnerable through strongly gendered *habitus*es. Most of the young women did not experience significant changes to these aspects of their identities as a result of participating in self-defence training. A small number experienced transient dispositions of empowerment and capability, which were more evident in students at School A. In general, students struggled with the complexity of the techniques they learned, memorising the necessary movements, and the time available for practice. I concluded that further research is required to explore the transformative effects of self-defence training on women's gendered *habitus*.

## INTRODUCTION

I am a woman. I am also experienced in martial arts. However, I am certain that I throw 'like a girl' and, despite many years of training in martial arts, I still believe that I 'fight like a girl'.

I have used the phrase 'like a girl' in this way because I have come, perhaps reluctantly, to recognise that I embody a gender stereotype. By this, I mean that I experience and feel certain things in gendered ways. For instance, I am hesitant in committing to physical action. I am afraid of getting hurt. I frequently doubt my ability to carry out the physical effort or skill required in many activities. When I fight, I am always the victim, the one who is 'done to' rather than the instigator of the action. In martial arts jargon, I am defensive - reactive to a perceived threat.

However, several years ago, while I was teaching self-defence, I had a series of experiences, which were at once so new to me, and so puzzling, that it felt as if I had acquired a new body. On each occasion, I had assumed the role of an assailant as part of simulated attack scenarios. But in this new identity, I found that I could propel myself through space to tackle my victim to the ground or throw my body under that of a student to absorb the impact of a high fall. I could even continue to fight immediately after tearing ligaments in my knee because pain was temporarily irrelevant. I found that I was single-minded in pursuit of a physical goal, physically and verbally aggressive, and that I never doubted my physical capacity to bring down the victim of my assault. Nothing mattered other than reaching the target of the chase and subduing the victim in the struggle. Paradoxically, my ability to protect the student from harm was also amplified because this body was in control of the physical situation it had created.

This new body of mine was strong, even explosive. Its capacity to perform physical tasks was extraordinary compared to the body that I had inhabited for so long. The experience of the potency that I discovered I could exert in each encounter, either to subdue or to protect, resulted in a 'rush' that mimicked sexual excitement. The orgiastic exhilaration of these moments was so strong that even now, as I think about it, my pulse quickens, my respiration contracts, and energy coils in my abdomen in

anticipation of release. I can only attribute these sensations to a memory of that other body's potential; which, to my frustration, I have not been able to realise physically since I stopped teaching self-defence.

Initially, I had regarded this transformation as a seminal moment in the development of my physical self-defence skills - my personal watershed - and I had expected that I would be able to continue to demonstrate the same kinds of physical abilities in my own training. I soon discovered I could not because I re-embodied the other fearful, vulnerable, and physically indecisive identity almost as soon as the role-playing ended.

The experiences were perplexing. Like many women, I had tended to live in my body as if it were something that was persistently vulnerable to physical dangers and threats. In terms powerfully raised for the first time by Simone de Beauvoir,<sup>1</sup> this body was a space all too open to being "colonised" by others and filled with experiences of passivity, weakness, defensiveness, vulnerability, softness, and hemmed in by physical limitations. These were also the array of qualities, attributes, and rules of conduct usually associated with being a woman.

But on certain occasions, I had also experienced myself as physically potent and assertive, however transiently, when I felt as if new possibilities and ways of being were opened up to me. Other women have reported similar experiences. In Mennesson's study of female boxers, one fighter reported that, 'In the ring, I let go. I'm no longer myself. It's a strange sensation, sometimes I wonder if I'm normal, if it's normal to fight like this'.<sup>2</sup> In terms that are central to my thesis, this woman's identity changed once she entered the ring. In this instance, Mennesson interpreted this transformation of identity as an experience of alienation:<sup>3</sup> that is, a feeling of disconnection from 'conventional feminine identity'.<sup>4</sup>

These sensations have come to constitute a constructive puzzle. Simply put, that puzzle is this: how and why was it that this female boxer experienced transformation,

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<sup>1</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (Vintage, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> Christine Mennesson, ' "Hard" Women and "Soft" Women" : The Social Construction of Identities Among Female Boxers' (2000) 35 *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 21, 28.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid 28.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

and how was that transformation possible? Over time, this puzzle has evolved into a research project and this thesis.

In this thesis, I explore certain aspects of women's identity, with a special focus on the way women experience their bodies, their physical prowess, and capacity to respond to real or potential threats to their physical integrity. I also focus on the prospects for changing aspects of that identity by means of an educational project that reflects my own long term interest in martial arts and my work as a teacher of self-defence for women.

My research project has been shaped by a small number of questions, which both reflect and are informed by a conjunction of certain theoretical and research frameworks. I will discuss these frameworks later.

This project will address three key research questions:

1. What light do categories like 'identity', and 'gendered habitus' shed on women's experience?
2. To what extent is women's gendered identity as female/feminine an embodied phenomenon? How do girls and women embody their identities?
3. Can the embodied aspects of women's gendered identity as female/feminine be transformed by purposive pedagogic projects like self defence training?

These questions are important for a number of reasons. Firstly, my research is designed to contribute to a long standing theoretical and research interest in identity and embodiment found in the social sciences.

For a great length of time, sociologists have been interested in the social dynamics at work in the processes whereby humans come to believe they both *have*, and *are*, a certain kind of person. Over the past century, different sociological traditions - including structural functionalism, symbolic interactionism, and Foucauldian 'structuralism' - have provided theorists and researchers with schema. These used a diverse array of categories like 'self', 'social role', 'socialisation', 'sex role', and 'governmentality' to try and characterise the ways 'personhood' comes into being, in the context of particular kinds of social relationships and those processes that define the 'social.'

Some writers have focussed on the category of 'identity'. There is a range of ways of thinking with and about the category of identity. Indeed, it is literally something of a protean category since identity can seem both obdurate and fixed, transient and shape shifting. Identity has objective and subjective dimensions, since it includes both the beliefs of, and expectations held by others, as well as those beliefs and expectations that individuals hold about themselves. It is also defined by numerous "identity markers" such as age, sexuality, gender, size, ethnicity, religion, clothing, status and so on. This means that different aspects of our self will be highlighted or obscured depending on the social settings in which we find ourselves.

Since the mid twentieth century, researchers have become particularly interested in the *formation* of identity. Identity includes beliefs that individuals hold about themselves. This means that the one person may have several different identities in different contexts: for example, being the 'good student' in a university, an 'elite sportsperson' in the arena, and a 'negligent wife' at home. There has also been increasing recognition that identity is an "embodied" phenomenon.<sup>5</sup> While the notion of "embodiment" will require further explanation, it is enough to say here that peoples' identity is at least partially vested in their bodies, including how those bodies look, what they are capable of doing, and how and what those bodies feel.<sup>6</sup>

Erikson suggested that the search for identity is a fundamental focus of adolescence.<sup>7</sup> Kirk and Tinning have further pointed out that adolescents, in particular, are intensely aware of the body as a 'dimension of self-identity.'<sup>8</sup> According to Giddens, children learn about their bodies through their bodies' practical experience with external events.<sup>9</sup> The body therefore is more than a physical entity and is much more an 'action-system' such that 'its practical immersion in the interactions of day-to-day life is an essential part of sustaining of a coherent sense of self-identity.'<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Polity Press, 1991) 56.

<sup>6</sup> Robyne Garrett, 'Negotiating a Physical Identity: Girls, Bodies and Physical Education' (2004) 9(2) *Sport, Education and Society* 223; Chris Shilling, *The Body and Social Theory* (Sage, 1993)

<sup>7</sup> Erik Erikson, *Identity, Youth and Crisis* (Norton, 1968); Erik Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (Penguin Books, 1972).

<sup>8</sup> David Kirk and Richard Tinning, 'Embodied Self-Identity, Healthy Lifestyles and School Physical Education' (1994) 16(5) *Sociology of Health and Illness* 600, 607.

<sup>9</sup> Giddens, above n 5, 56.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 99.

Researchers and theorists have considered how women embody their identity in many different contexts. Researchers have investigated participation in sport,<sup>11</sup> queer theory,<sup>12</sup> body building,<sup>13</sup> pornography,<sup>14</sup> menstruation and menopause,<sup>15</sup> pregnancy, and lactation,<sup>16</sup> anorexia,<sup>17</sup> diet,<sup>18</sup> appearance,<sup>19</sup> cosmetic surgery,<sup>20</sup> disability,<sup>21</sup> and gender re-assignment.<sup>22</sup>

One essential puzzle is related to how a woman's sense of self as passive, vulnerable, physically weak, and reactive comes about and feels so 'natural'. My thesis aims to make sense of that puzzle. I will do so by mobilising Bourdieu's distinctive approach to investigating the social world. He conceived it as a world with sites of forms of "practice". This practice is characterised by what he called *habitus*, and is shaped in fields where power is used to determine the character of that practice. As I will suggest, Bourdieu's argument that who we are is the product of the relationship between internal (individual agency) and external (social structure) effects, opens up some important ways of thinking about women's "gendered habitus".

Gendered habitus broadly refers to the 'social construction of masculinity and femininity that shapes the body, defines how the body is perceived, forms the body's habits and possibilities for expression, and thus determines the individual's identity—

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<sup>11</sup> Cara Carmichael Aitchison (ed), *Sport and Gender Identities: Masculinities, Femininities and Sexualities* (Routledge, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> Dawn Aitkins, (Ed) *Looking Queer: Body Image and Identity and Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay and Transgender Communities* (Harrington Park Press, 1998).

<sup>13</sup> Leslie Heywood, *Bodybuilders: a Cultural Anatomy of Women's Body Building* (Rutgers University Press, 1998).

<sup>14</sup> Celia R Daileader, 'The Uses of Ambivalence: Pornography and Female Heterosexual Identity' (1997) 26(1) *Women's Studies* 73.

<sup>15</sup> Emily Martin, 'Medical Metaphors of Women's Bodies: Menstruation and Menopause' in Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina, and Sarah Sranbury (eds), *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory* (Columbia University Press, 1997) 15.

<sup>16</sup> Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick, *Feminist Theory and the Body: a Reader* (Routledge, 1999).

<sup>17</sup> Julie Hepworth, *The Social Construction of Anorexia Nervosa* (Sage Publications, 1999) 69; Morga MacSween, *Anorexic: A Feminist and Sociological Perspective on Anorexia Nervosa* (Routledge, 1993).

<sup>18</sup> Sandra Bartky, *Feminism and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (Routledge, 1990).

<sup>19</sup> Shelley Budgeon, 'Identity as an Embodied Event' (2003) 9 *Body and Society* 35; Sharlene Janice Hesse-Biber and Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber, *Am I Thin Enough Yet? The Cult of Thinness and the Commercialization of Identity* (Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>20</sup> Kathy Davis, *Reshaping the Female Body* (Routledge, 1995).

<sup>21</sup> Isabel Dyck, 'Body Troubles: Women, Workplace and Negotiations of a Disabled Identity' in Ruth Butler and Hester Parr (eds), *Mind and Body Spaces: Geographies of Illness, Impairment and Disability* (1999) 119.

<sup>22</sup> Sandy Stone, 'The Empire Strikes Back: a Posttranssexual Manifesto' in Conboy et al, above n 17; Myra Hird, 'Gender's Nature: Intersexuality, Transsexualism and the "Sex"/"Gender" Binary' (2000) 1 *Feminist Theory* 347.

via the body—as masculine or feminine’.<sup>23</sup> I use Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, practice, and field for two reasons: firstly, to discuss the production of gendered habitus and gendered practice; and secondly because it will enable me to explore the question of the capacity of humans to change such deeply inertial aspects of their lives as their gendered habitus.

Apart from the theoretical issues which I engage in my thesis, my research also has certain practical implications. I hope, for example, that my thesis will contribute to understanding how women think about and deal with threats to their physical integrity and well-being, posed by the threat of assault and especially rape.

In particular, my thesis contributes to ongoing work in relation to self-defence methods in the context of sexual assault. Women embody their identities as vulnerable in physical and sexual contexts. This environmental susceptibility is also suggested as one reason why women, particularly younger women,<sup>24</sup> fear rape more than any other crime.<sup>25</sup> Women who express their identities as weak, vulnerable, soft, defensive, and reactive may be at risk when confronted by rape and other assaults if they respond in these ways to threat, because there is considerable evidence of a link between fighting back and rape avoidance.<sup>26</sup>

As Walklate has pointed out, ‘fear, risk and danger’ are gendered phenomena. Women are seen, for example, as more vulnerable to victimisation involving physical assault because of presumptions about the size, strength, and aggression differential

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<sup>23</sup> Beate Kraus, ‘Gender, Sociological Theory and Bourdieu’s Sociology of Practice’ (2006) 23 *Theory Culture Society* 119, 121; Holly Thorpe, ‘Bourdieu, Feminism and Female Physical Culture: Gender Reflexivity and the Habitus-Field Complex’ (2009) 26 *Sociology of Sport* 491, 500.

<sup>24</sup> Analise Poropat, *Understanding Women's Rape Experiences and Fears* (University of Queensland, 1992); Mark Warr, ‘Dangerous Situations: Social Context and Fear of Victimization’ (1990) 68 *Social Forces* 891; Mark Warr, ‘Fear of Rape among Urban Women’ (1985) 32 *Social Problems* 238.

<sup>25</sup> Kenneth Ferraro, ‘Women’s Fear of Victimization: Shadow of Sexual Assault’ (1996) 75 *Social Forces* 667.

<sup>26</sup> Beverley M Atkeson, Karen S Calhoun, and Kim T Morris, ‘Victim Resistance to Rape: The Relationship of Previous Victimization, Demographic and Situational Factors’, (1989) 18 *Archives of Sexual Behaviour* 497; Pauline B Bart and Patricia H B O’Brien, *Stopping Rape: Successful Survival Strategies* (Pergamon Press, 1985); Sarah E Ullman and Raymond A Knight, ‘Fighting Back: Women’s Resistance to Rape’ (1992) 7 *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 31; Janice M Zoucha-Jensen and Ann Coyne, ‘The Effects of Resistance Strategies on Rape’ (1993) 83 *American Journal of Public Health* 1633; A J Lizotte, ‘Determinants of Completing Rape and Assault’ (1986) 2 *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 203; Barry Ruback and Deborah L Ivie, ‘Prior Relationship, Resistance and Injury in Rapes: An Analysis of Crisis Centre Records’ (1998) 3 *Violence and Victims* 99.

between men and women,<sup>27</sup> their relative physical competencies,<sup>28</sup> as well as presumptions about women's special vulnerability to rape. Women begin learning about their vulnerability in adolescence when they receive warnings about the need for precautionary behaviors, and are exposed to adult fears about potential dangers. Individually, women's fears about rape and other assaults derive from their own identities as women who are vulnerable to assault and incapable of self-protection.

Women are also vulnerable in some public spaces. Not only may gender role stereotyping of women as weaker lead to 'the expectation that women will be at risk in situations where men are safe',<sup>29</sup> but women also experience public spaces differently to men. Valentine has suggested that associations made between male violence and specific environments influence women's use of public space.<sup>30</sup> As a result, women's fears about rape, which results from fears about men, may influence how they negotiate experiences in public spaces. Rachel Pain has also suggested that women's fear of men will not necessarily be addressed by rectifying environmental risk factors or 'designing out fear' because this does not necessarily take account of *who* is to be feared.<sup>31</sup>

Women also express their vulnerabilities by adopting certain coping strategies. For example, they might modify their appearance and behaviours to minimise the risk of assault. Others cope by changing their routines, and by making decisions on where to live,<sup>32</sup> where to walk, how to get to and from work safely, what places to avoid,<sup>33</sup> where to socialise, who to socialise with, where to exercise, the likely presence of people in public places, and what security measures to put in place at home, in the car and on their persons.<sup>34</sup> Women's lifestyles may be heavily constrained as a result.<sup>35</sup> Girls' experiences of physicality can challenge social and individual assumptions

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<sup>27</sup> Mary B Harris and Kari C Miller, 'Gender and Perceptions of Danger' (2000) 43 *Sex Roles* 843, 858; W Skogan and M Maxfield, *Coping with Crime* (Sage, 1981).

<sup>28</sup> Poropat, above n 24.

<sup>29</sup> Harris and Miller, above n 27, 857.

<sup>30</sup> Gill Valentine, 'The Geography of Women's Fear' (1989) 21(4) *Area* 385, 386.

<sup>31</sup> Rachel Pain, 'Place, Social Relations and the Fear of Crime: a Review' (2000) 24 (3) *Progress in Human Geography* 365, 372.

<sup>32</sup> Carol Brooks Gardner, 'Safe Conduct: Women, Crime, and Self in Public Places' (1990) 37 *Social Problems* 311.

<sup>33</sup> Thomas M Vander Ven, 'Fear of Victimization and the Interactional Construction of Harassment in a Latino Neighbourhood' (1998) 27 *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 374.

<sup>34</sup> Karia A Henderson and M Deborah Bialeschki, 'Fear as a Constraint to Active Lifestyles for Females' (1993) 64 *The Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance* 44; Poropat, above n 24, 116; Gardner, above n 32.

<sup>35</sup> Henderson and Bialeschki, above n 34; Ferraro, above n 25.



about how men and women are supposed to experience their bodies according to gender stereotypes.<sup>36</sup> Garrett, for example, has suggested that ‘women’s experiences of physical empowerment may be converted to social empowerment: through the development and achievement of particular skills and then the opportunity to display skills.’<sup>37</sup>

In this thesis, I consider the efficacy of self-defence training as an intervention to address women’s gendered habitus; a habitus which makes it seem both natural and desirable that women be passive, afraid, physically unadventurous, or reactive. The preponderance of work in relation to gendered habitus has been in relation to teasing out the intersection of habitus and gender, and in relation to specific physical fields such as snowboarding,<sup>38</sup> or physical education in schools.<sup>39</sup> Other research has been directed at the way women have taken on more active roles in policing, such as performing patrol duties and street policing;<sup>40</sup> or been employed in military roles, including front line duty in armed conflicts.

However, the focus of this research has tended towards capturing the ways women have pursued increased participation or by addressing the physical effects of participation in training in terms of injury; as well as the prevalence of ongoing discrimination, sexual assault and harassment within these organizations - particularly in relation to the military.<sup>41</sup> In this respect, my work adds some new dimensions to this research tradition.

I will now briefly outline how I carried out this research and how I designed my thesis.

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<sup>36</sup> Sarah Gilroy, ‘The Embodiment of Power: Gender and Physical Activity’ (1989) 8(2) *Leisure Studies* 163.

<sup>37</sup> Garrett above n 6, 235.

<sup>38</sup> Thorpe above n 23.

<sup>39</sup> Trish Gorely, Rachel Holroyd and David Kirk, ‘Muscularity, the Habitus and the Social Construction of Gender: Towards a Gender Relevant Physical Education’ (2003) 24(4) *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 429.

<sup>40</sup> Kathryn E Scarborough and Pamela Ann Collins, *Women in Public and Private Law Enforcement* (Butterworth-Heinemann, 2002); Cara Rabe-Hemp, ‘Survival in an “All Boys Club”: Policewomen and Their Fight for Acceptance’ (2008) 31(2) *Policing : An International Journal of Police Strategies and Management* 251; Vicki Wilkinson and Irene D Froyland, *Women in Policing (No. 58 Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice)* (Australian Institute of Criminology, 1996).

<sup>41</sup> Kathryn Quinn, *Sexual Harassment in the Australian Defence Force* (Defence Centre, 1996); On 12<sup>th</sup> April, 2011, the Defence Minister Stephen Smith announced six inquiries into sexual harassment within the Australian military: <http://www.news.com.au/features/adfa/defence-force-cadet-scandal-senior-officers-accused-of-male-rape/story-fn8eum6d-1226036914555>.

As I have already indicated, my thesis works out from a certain body of social theory. That theoretical framing relies on the work of Pierre Bourdieu in relation to habitus, embodied identity and the dialectical relationship between structure and agency. I chose this framework because it offers the most fruitful basis for addressing the issues posed by my research questions.

The more empirical aspects of my research are best understood as a kind of naturalistic research process, relying on a constructivist paradigm of inquiry and interpretation. My research work took place in the context of a number of self-defence courses delivered by different instructors as part of compulsory physical education at two secondary girls' schools located in Melbourne, Australia.

A naturalistic study was the most appropriate design for this research because of the natural setting of the self-defence course, the choice of qualitative methods of interviewing and observation, and the significance of my own role as the self-defence instructor at one school. However, the reliance on both social constructivism and Bourdieu's framework calls for a brief comment here.

Granted that while Bourdieu acknowledged that people create their 'vision of the world',<sup>42</sup> he insisted that there are constraints imposed by objective structures, which are independent of 'the consciousness and will of agents'.<sup>43</sup> For this reason, Bourdieu's framework has been described as *constructivist structuralism* or *structuralist constructivism*.<sup>44</sup> However, because I am interested in how women experience their physical identities and the possibilities for transformation, I believe that a social constructivist frame is also relevant and useful.

Constructivists tend to emphasise the more creative and transformative aspects of social relations thereby highlighting the potential for individuals to construct new realities. In this respect, social constructivism offers a better position to understand those subjective experiences.<sup>45</sup> Equally, a standard criticism of social constructivism

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<sup>42</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *In Other Words: Essays Toward a Reflexive Sociology* (Stanford University Press, 1990) 130.

<sup>43</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, 'Social Space and Symbolic Power' (1989) 7(1) *Sociological Theory* 14, 14

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas A Schwandt, 'Constructivist, Interpretivist Approaches to Human Inquiry', in Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds) *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Sage Publications, 1994) 118, 118; John Hughes and Wesley Sharrock, *The Philosophy Of Social Research* (Longman, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed, 1997) 101.

has been its lack of regard for the more structural features of the social world. This tension points to some potential for an accusation by readers of a degree of conceptual incoherence on my part, which I will address at an appropriate point later in my thesis.

I will conclude here by outlining the approach I have taken to addressing my key research questions.

In **Chapter One**, I situate my work in the relevant traditions of inquiry. In particular, I outline the relevant theoretical frameworks I can use to explore the process of identity formation and embodied identity. I begin by considering the sociological tradition of sex role theory and the limits that the kinds of structuralism central to that tradition placed on the prospects for human agency. I then provide an overview of identity theory with particular emphasis on the work of Anthony Giddens and his structuration theory. It has been observed often enough that Giddens' work addresses the problems set up by assuming a binary between 'structure' and 'agency', and therefore has certain similarities with Bourdieu's work.

Bourdieu's work is the focus of the remainder of the first chapter. I outline the conceptual elements of Bourdieu's practice framed in terms of categories like 'habitus' 'practice', 'capital' and 'field' and consider how gender is conceptualised within that framework. I stress the way Bourdieu's theory of habitus explains how social experiences are reproduced in the body.

In **Chapter Two**, I consider some of the ways in which women experience their physical identities, especially their physical vulnerabilities. I reflect on how biological and socially constructed characteristics many understand to be 'natural' are ascribed to women in the context of their ongoing social relations and practice. I then consider gendered perceptions about the kinds of role behaviors that are considered appropriate for women, particularly in the context of practices like sport. This is followed by a discussion of women's experiences in performing physical tasks. I again turn to Bourdieu's theory of practice to better understand how women experience their bodies in these ways.

Because I am interested in the prospects of people being able to change core aspects of their gendered identity, in **Chapter Three** I will consider the potential for

transforming aspects of women's identity. Given the sense that so many women have that they are 'weak', 'passive', or 'vulnerable' and that this is just the way things are, I ask what the prospects are for using some form of pedagogic intervention to change this. I do this because there is little research on the kinds of practices that might bring about change in women's gendered habitus, although a number of writers have considered the presence of reflexivity and voluntarism in Bourdieu's conceptual apparatus.

I begin by looking at the prospects for change within the terms provided for by Bourdieu's own framework, in particular the problems of a 'durable' and 'permanent' set of dispositions. I then consider the possibilities offered by Bandura's theory of self-efficacy to instigate change followed by a review of a few studies such as Crossley's work on reflexive embodiment, which have addressed how habitus can be changed. Finally I consider the possibility of changing aspects of women's physical identity through self defence training.

In **Chapter Four**, I outline the processes I used to address the research questions. Here I outline the qualitative methods of observation, participant observation, interviewing and focus group interviewing, as well as describe the theoretical assumptions of constructivist inquiry, which I used to shape the research. This is followed in **Chapter Five** with a discussion of the requirements for a naturalistic study within a constructivist paradigm, including quality criteria, and how this study complies with those requirements. I complete the consideration of methodological issues in **Chapter Six** by outlining the data collection processes I used including the sampling strategies, as well as the constant comparison method of analysis adopted in the study.

In **Chapters Seven and Eight**, I present the research data and discuss it. In Chapter Seven, I explore girls' understanding of gendered attributes: in particular the physical characteristics of girls and boys, as well as the ways in which boys and girls experience physical activities and situations of physical threat. I then discuss girls' understanding of their own physical vulnerability

In **Chapter Nine**, I describe and explore the responses of participants to self-defence training and arrive at some conclusions about the transformative potential of self-defence education.

Finally, in my conclusion, I offer some final thoughts about the overall significance of my research.

## **Chapter 1      THEORISING THE GENDERED BODY**

The only rule I imposed on myself when I began training in martial arts was that I would never cry when I got hurt. And I have been hurt many times. The years have been littered with broken noses, countless sprains, and strains. On one memorable Christmas, I enjoyed a liquid dinner through a straw simply because I had not been fast enough to avoid a punch. I have practised and practised the different movements and strategies, undertaken rigorous fitness training and although I have never broken the ‘rule’, the body I continue to bring to physical encounters – in my mind – is unchangeably and unforgivably ‘feminine’. By that, I am referring not only to the experience of being in the body of a woman but also to the gendered ways I live that body.

And yet, as I have indicated in my introduction, I have experienced moments when that femininity gave way to something else as I experienced a physical transfiguration. The puzzle resulting from that experience has two key aspects: how it is that women’s self-conceptions as physically weak, vulnerable, reactive, defensive, and passive come to feel so ‘natural’? More particularly for this research, what do these self-concepts suggest about women’s capacity for action when their physical integrity is threatened?

It is a truism to suggest that women’s corporeality is often experienced more intensely than men’s through such generative necessities as menstruation, childbirth, and lactation. These quite basic processes provide women with significant aspects of their identity. Arguably, this is also the case when we take into account the relative fragility of the female body. In this thesis, I want to establish how women understand their physical identities and their relative vulnerabilities. In the later part of this thesis, I also want to consider the possibilities for transformation or refashioning through physical practice, in particular through participation in self-defence training. To what extent are women able to construct and fashion their identities? Are we in control of our own actions and our own identities or is this determined by social circumstance?

Both the question of women's gendered status, their sexed bodies, and their capacity to refashion themselves raise serious theoretical questions.

There has been longstanding debate in the relevant social sciences about the extent to which, on the one hand, people have agency and are therefore self-determining in the sense that they are able freely to choose how to act; and on the other, how constrained humans are by external social, political, and economic 'structures' or 'forces' that limit individual opportunities. The conventions for talking about these constraints include reference to structures like 'race', 'ethnicity', 'gender', and 'class'. How and what should we think about this debate, given that my particular preoccupation with gender and women's identity involves thinking about the play of choice and constraint?

Social sciences – sociology and anthropology in particular – have been enthralled with the relation between 'structure' and 'agency' over a long period. The agent/structure relationship has been interpreted in different ways but always in ways that implicitly juxtaposed an objectivist and a subjectivist orientation. Some theories like the theoretical work of Durkheim emphasised the primacy of social structure. Theories of sex role socialisation framed within the American 'structural functionalist' tradition have also emphasised the dominance of structure in determining individual conduct.<sup>1</sup>

In reaction to the implied determinism of the structural functionalist account of social action, more critically inclined writers like Gouldner argued in the 1960s and 1970s that sociology needed to stop trying to produce 'objective' accounts of structures and to start to explore the intersubjective nature of social life.<sup>2</sup> While Gouldner was influenced by the Marxist tradition, others drew on traditions like phenomenology and symbolic interactionism as they argued that people are capable of *agency* – that is, performing conscious, intentional actions despite the constraints of their social milieu.

A third position is represented by writers like Giddens, who has attempted to reconcile these perspectives by addressing the binary relation between *structure* and

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<sup>1</sup> For example Talcott Parsons and Robert F Bales, *Family, Socialization and Interaction Process* (Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1956); Talcott Parsons, *Sociological Theory and Modern Society* (The Free Press, 1967); See discussion in Ruth A Wallace and Alison Wolf, *Contemporary Sociological Theory* (Prentice-Hall, 1980).

<sup>2</sup> Alvin W Gouldner, *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology* (Avon, 1970).

*agency* as he developed what he called his ‘structuration’ theory<sup>3</sup>; or by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann in their account of the ‘social construction of reality’.<sup>4</sup> Bourdieu arguably offers the most fully developed approach to this problem in his work on a ‘theory of practice’.<sup>5</sup> For reasons, which are outlined below, I will draw on Pierre Bourdieu’s framing of the idea of practice. His work seems to open up an especially fruitful way of thinking about the body and bodily practice and the ‘two-way relationship’ between ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ aspects of the social.<sup>6</sup>

In this chapter, I offer a brief outline of the older tradition of sex role theory before I suggest some of the difficulties associated with the structuralist emphasis on socialisation. This is followed by an overview of identity theory; in particular, the work of Anthony Giddens, whose work has some parallels with that of Bourdieu. The final part of the chapter considers the application of Bourdieu’s theories in relation to women’s embodied identities.

## **Sex role socialisation**

Traditional sex role theory assumed that men and women were constrained to play the respective gender roles associated with expectations about masculinity and femininity as specified by what were often referred to as ‘sex role scripts’.<sup>7</sup> It should be noted quickly that in the subsequent shift to talking about ‘gender role’ theory, ‘gender’ has displaced ‘sex’ when thinking about roles.<sup>8</sup> This semantic shift represents a move to emphasise social and cultural dynamics, rather than focus on biological difference.

In Parsons’ early development of role theory, men and women performed complementary roles that were functionally necessary to fulfil certain fundamental

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<sup>3</sup> Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (University of California Press 1984).

<sup>4</sup> Giddens, above n 3; Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Doubleday, 1966).

<sup>5</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge University Press, 1977); Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford University Press, 1990).

<sup>6</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Practical Reason: on the Theory of Action* (Polity Press, 1998) vii.

<sup>7</sup> Arlie Hochschild, ‘A Review of Sex Role Research’ (1973) 78 (4) *The American Journal of Sociology* 1011.

<sup>8</sup> Candace West, and Don H Zimmerman, ‘Doing Gender’ in Judith Lorber and Susan A Farrell (eds) *The Social Construction of Gender* (1991) 13, 15.



social functions associated with economic production and biological reproduction.<sup>9</sup> Men were said to be suited to more instrumental roles involving competition and rationality, while women were said to be more suited to expressive functions such as nurturing and creative work. This perspective assumed that men and women were socialised into sex appropriate behaviours. Connell, for instance, has argued that sex role theory 'connects social structure with the formation of personality'.<sup>10</sup> It does this through the idea of role learning or the internalisation of role expectations.<sup>11</sup>

This body of theoretical and empirical work further presupposed that gender roles existed prior to being occupied by individuals, were embedded in the relevant social structures, and were acquired through the process of socialisation.<sup>12</sup> As Katz put it:

...gender-role socialization begins at birth and continues throughout life. Thus, gender is an integral part of who we are, how we think about ourselves, and how others respond to us.<sup>13</sup>

According to this approach, men's socialisation process teaches them to be providers while women become feminine by learning the female roles of wives, mothers, and homemakers.<sup>14</sup> Men and women develop the kinds of attributes and skills they need to carry out their respective roles so women develop 'feminine' characteristics such as passivity, caring and empathy for others; while men develop 'instrumental' characteristics such as competitiveness and enterprise, as these further their success in the workplace, enabling them to fulfil their roles as providers.<sup>15</sup>

The 'sex role' theory approach was commonly used in family studies, and was often preoccupied with women's roles.<sup>16</sup> In the early 1970s, pioneering feminist sociologists adopted the language of 'roles' and emphasised the 'process of sex role socialization' as part of its attempt to develop a critical feminist theory. This approach

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<sup>9</sup> Parsons and Bales, above n 1.

<sup>10</sup> Robert W Connell, 'Theorising Gender' (1985) 19 *Sociology* 260, 263.

<sup>11</sup> Connell, 'Theorising Gender', above n 10; Anne R. Edwards, 'Sex Roles: A Problem for Sociology and Women' (1983) 19 *Journal of Sociology* 385, 393.

<sup>12</sup> Jonathan H Turner, *The Handbook of Sociological Theory* (Springer, 2006) 217.

<sup>13</sup> Phyllis Katz, 'The Development of Female Identity' (1979) 5 (2) *Sex Roles* 155, 155.

<sup>14</sup> Connell, above n 10, 263.

<sup>15</sup> Parsons and Bales, above n 1.

<sup>16</sup> Edwards above n 11, 396.

to the analysis of gender retained its functionalist roots, and the concomitant emphasis on consensus, social order, and continuity.<sup>17</sup>

However, sex role analysis has been heavily criticised.<sup>18</sup> Connell for example has argued that one of the fundamental problems with sex role theory was the way its proponents treated sex (and later 'gender') roles, in highly determinist ways. As Edwards explained:

The definition of role in terms of norms and the assumption of value consensus leads to the equation of role with position, of expectations with behaviour, and human action with the requirements of social institutions and the social system resulting thereby in a highly socially deterministic model.<sup>19</sup>

The capacity for women to effect change is inherently constrained at least as a theoretical possibility by the terms of the sex role framework, while sex role theory has been criticised as underplaying the effects of the experience of conflict, tension, and change. In the words of Stryker, 'People are visualised as automatons who simply accept and reflect social norms they have been socialized to adopt'.<sup>20</sup>

In this sense, sex role theory tended pre-emptively to rule out the possibility that women might be able to undertake reflexively to both understand themselves and to effect change in their relationships and modes of conduct. Connell has also noted that sex role theory proved to be 'fundamentally static as social theory'<sup>21</sup> and therefore unable to treat human beings in any way as historical beings. Equally even as they developed 'a form of social determinism', stressing the way people are trapped in stereotypes and expectations,<sup>22</sup> the 'social dimension' also, and paradoxically, dissolved into voluntarism.<sup>23</sup> This is because those agents who sanction role performance, such as parents, choose whether or not to apply sanctions.

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<sup>17</sup> Judith Stacey and Barrie Thorne, 'The Missing Feminist Revolution in Sociology' in Linda Kauffman (ed), *American Feminist Thought at Century's End: A Reader* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1993) 175.

<sup>18</sup> Connell, above n 10, 263.

<sup>19</sup> Edwards, above n 11, 393.

<sup>20</sup> Sheldon Stryker, Traditional Symbolic Interactionism, Role Theory, and Structural Symbolic Interactionism: The Road to Identity Theory in Jonathan H Turner (ed), *Handbook of Sociological Theory* (Springer, 2006), 220.

<sup>21</sup> Robert Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics* (Stanford University Press, 1987) 53.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid 50.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

## Identity Theories

Under the sex role approach, identities are ‘internalised role expectations’.<sup>24</sup> But other views about identity have emerged in sociology over the past few decades. Identity theorists such as Sheldon Stryker focused on the reciprocal relationship between society and the self.<sup>25</sup> This approach grew out of symbolic interactionism and the work of George Mead<sup>26</sup> and assumes that although roles produced by society are the basis of identity, the self is formed in interaction with other people.<sup>27</sup>

Some writers such as Stryker and Serpe have emphasised the influence of social structure on identity,<sup>28</sup> something that Stryker describes as ‘structural symbolic interactionism’ while others such as Burke and Stets focus on internal identity processes.<sup>29</sup> Theorists promoting ‘structural symbolic interactionism’ have focused on ‘linking social interaction to roles and to identities’ as well as looking at how social structures influence entry into the position associated with roles impacting on social interaction and identities.<sup>30</sup> According to Stryker, ‘[i]dentity theory derives from a structural symbolic interactionist frame, offering an explanation of the choices persons make in situations in which they have the possibility of enacting alternative role-related actions’.<sup>31</sup> This perspective assumes that the possibility of choice is always open for human actors but within the constraints of social structure and social interaction.<sup>32</sup> Stryker argued that:

Self must be seen as multifaceted, comprised of diverse parts that sometimes are independent of one another and sometimes interdependent, sometimes mutually

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<sup>24</sup> Sheldon Stryker and Peter J. Burke, ‘The Past, Present, and Future of an Identity Theory,’ (2000) 63(4) *Social Psychology Quarterly* 284-297, 286.

<sup>25</sup> Sheldon Stryker, *Symbolic Interactionism: A Social Structural Version* (Blackburn Press, 2002).

<sup>26</sup> For example, George Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist* edited by Charles W Morris (University of Chicago Press, 1934); George Mead, *Selected Writings: George Herbert Mead*, edited by Andrew J Reck (University of Chicago Press, 1964).

<sup>27</sup> Sheldon Stryker, ‘Identity Theory and Personality Theory: Mutual Relevance’ (2007) 75(6) *Journal of Personality* 1083-1102.

<sup>28</sup> E.g. Richard Serpe and Sheldon Stryker, ‘The Construction of Self and Reconstruction of Social Relationships’ in E Lawler and B Markovsky (eds) *Advances in Group Processes: Theory and Research Vol.4* (JAI Press, 1987) 41; S Stryker and R T Serpe, ‘Identity Salience and Psychological Centrality: Equivalent, Overlapping or Complementary Concepts?’ (1994) 57 *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 16–34.

<sup>29</sup> E.g. J E Stets and P J Burke, ‘Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory’ (2000) 63 *Social Psychology Quarterly* 224; P J Burke and A D Cast, ‘Stability and Change in the Gender Identities of Newly Married Couples’ (1997) 60 *Social Psychology Quarterly* 277; T Tsushima and P J Burke, ‘Levels, Agency, and Control in the Parent Identity’ (1999) 62 *Social Psychology Quarterly* 173.

<sup>30</sup> Stryker, above n 27, 1083-1084.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid 1084.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid 1086.

reinforcing and sometimes conflicting, as well as being organized in many ways. It calls for a sense of self in accord with James' (1890) assertion that persons have as many selves as they have other persons who react to them, or at the least, as many as there are groups of others who react to them.<sup>33</sup>

People are therefore seen as having multiple personalities or identities, which are tied to different roles, for example an identity as 'son', 'father', 'doctor', 'gardener' and so forth. People have as many identities 'as distinct networks of relationship in which they occupy positions and play roles.'<sup>34</sup>

Another approach to the structure-agency debate associated with the work of Giddens also emphasises the role of human agency in the formation of identity.<sup>35</sup> This approach regards the individual as a 'self-interpreting subject'.<sup>36</sup> In this model of identity, agents are understood as proactive in creating conditions for change.<sup>37</sup> Giddens was interested in the changing nature of self-identity in the situation of the breakdown of tradition and the growth of reflexivity in modern life. Giddens argued that role theory had 'neglected agency'.<sup>38</sup> He thought there were tendencies in sociological theory either to overvalue the power of structure over individuals, or to overlook structure and culture in attributing agency to human beings.

Giddens set about integrating 'structure' and 'agency', and his 'structuration' theory is an attempt to illuminate the reciprocal production or mutual constitution of structure and agency.<sup>39</sup> Actions of individuals who reflexively monitor their own activities as well as those of other people establish patterns of social interaction.<sup>40</sup> This process results in structural conditions, which are simultaneously the framework for social interaction. The iterative looping of structure into agency, and agency into structure, results in a duality of structure.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid 1091.

<sup>34</sup> Stryker and Burke, above n 24, 286.

<sup>35</sup> Karen Cerulo, 'Identity Construction-New Issues, New Directions (1997) 23 *Annual Review of Sociology* 385.

<sup>36</sup> Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Harvard University Press, 1989) 112.

<sup>37</sup> For example, Margaret Archer, *Being Human: the Problem of Agency* (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>38</sup> Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, above n 3, 84.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid 25.

<sup>40</sup> Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford University Press, 1991) 35.

Crucial to the idea of structuration is the theorem of the duality of structure ... The constitution of agents and structures are not two independently given sets of phenomena, a dualism, but represent a duality. According to the notion of the duality of structure, the structural properties of social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices that recursively organize.<sup>41</sup>

Identity in Giddens's account is 'an emergent process, taking place at the crossroads of structure and agency...[Identity is] constitutive of and constituted by the social environment.'<sup>42</sup> Giddens' structuration theory<sup>43</sup> assumes knowledgeable and competent human agents who reflexively monitor their actions against existing structural opportunities and constraints:

It is the specifically reflexive form of the knowledgeability of human agents that is most deeply involved in the recursive ordering of social practices. Continuity of practices presumes reflexivity, but reflexivity in turn is possible only because of the continuity of practices that makes them distinctively 'the same' across space and time. 'Reflexivity' hence should be understood as not merely as 'self-consciousness', but as the monitored character of the ongoing flow of social life. To be a human being is to be a purposive agent, who both has reasons for his or her activities and is able, if asked, to elaborate discursively upon those reasons...<sup>44</sup>

In Giddens's view, individuals are actively involved in the construction of their own identities. Identity is understood as an ongoing 'reflexive narrative', which means that self-identity is not a collection of attributes but rather our understanding of our own biographies or histories. Giddens argued that while self-identity has continuity, which limits the individual's capacity to change that identity by choice, continuity is only a product of our reflexive beliefs about our own biographies.<sup>45</sup> He said:

Self identity is not a distinctive trait, or even a collection of traits, possessed by the individual, It is *the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography*. Identity here still presumes continuity across time and space but self-identity is such continuity as interpreted reflexively by the agent.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, above n 3, 25.

<sup>42</sup> Tope Omoniyi and Goodith White, *The Sociolinguistics of Identity* (Continuum International, 2006) 38.

<sup>43</sup> Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, above n 3.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid 3.

<sup>45</sup> Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, above n 40, 53.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. Emphasis in original.

For Giddens, agency refers to a person's capability to undertake purposive action.<sup>47</sup> He has consistently emphasised the role of agency in the reflexive project of self. Human agents are increasingly able to determine self-identity through 'conscious' choices and are thus responsible for their own 'reflexive projects'.<sup>48</sup> 'We are, not what we are, but what we make of ourselves'.<sup>49</sup> However, individuals construct the 'project of the self' within the practices of everyday life.

Giddens' structuration theory has been criticised for failing to specify the principles with sufficient clarity.<sup>50</sup> Archer, for example, has argued that Giddens simply clamps 'the two sides of the duality of structure together rather than overcome the dichotomy between voluntarism and determinism'.<sup>51</sup> Shilling and Mellor were also concerned that Giddens's 'attempt to replace structure/agency dualism with the duality of structure is, then built on a growing division between the physical body and the mind'.<sup>52</sup> They point to a Cartesian assumption at work in Giddens who allows that while 'structure and agency have an embodied basis for Giddens, his emphasis is really on the mind'.<sup>53</sup> A Cartesian understanding of identity assumes a dualism in which the problem of how 'mind' is connected to body' becomes a permanent and insoluble problem.<sup>54</sup>

To this extent, while Giddens's work is valuable it presents a basic problem granted the evidence of the extent to which women tend to live their bodies in thoroughly gendered ways. This requires us to consider other theoretical frameworks that treat the body as central to identity.

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<sup>47</sup> Giddens *The Constitution of Society*, above n 3, 9.

<sup>48</sup> Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, above n 40, 52.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid 75.

<sup>50</sup> Christopher G A Bryant, 'Sociology without Philosophy? The Case of Giddens's Structuration Theory' (1992) 10(2) *Sociological Theory* 137, 141; Gregor McLennan, 'Critical or Positive Theory? A Comment on the Status of Anthony Giddens' Social Theory' (1984) 2(2) *Theory, Culture and Society* 123, 125.

<sup>51</sup> Margaret S Archer, 'Morphogenesis versus Structuration: On Combining Structure and Action' (1982) 33(4) *The British Journal of Sociology* 455, 460; Margaret S Archer, 'Morphogenesis Versus Structuration: On Combining Structure and Action' (2010) 61(1) *British Journal of Sociology* 225, 227.

<sup>52</sup> Chris Shilling and Philip A Mellor, 'Embodiment, Structuration Theory and Modernity: Mind/Body Dualism and the Repression of Sensuality' (1996) 2(1) *Body and Society* 1, 8.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid 12.

<sup>54</sup> Carrie Paechter, 'Reconceptualizing the Gendered Body: Learning and Constructing Masculinities and Femininities in School' (2006) 18(2) *Gender and Education* 121, 123.

## Embodied identity

The literature on identity is diverse. However, there has been a growing realisation that identity is located in the body. In particular, phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, drawing on Heidegger's phenomenology of being, critiqued the Cartesian mind/body dichotomy and argued that identity is embedded in the lived body which is how we experience, or have access to, the world. He argued that:

...consciousness projects itself into a physical world and has a body, as it projects itself into a cultural world and has its habits: because it cannot be consciousness without playing upon significances given either in the absolute past of nature or in its own personal past, and because any form of lived experience tends towards a certain generality whether that of our habits or that of our 'bodily functions.'<sup>55</sup>

In other words, 'our own body is in the world'<sup>56</sup> but the body is also *how* we perceive the world. He said that '[the body] keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive, it breathes life into it and sustains it inwardly, and with it forms a system'.<sup>57</sup> There is no consciousness without the body so what we perceive as objects in the world are the result of our body's experience.

The object is made determinate as an identifiable being only through a whole open series of possible experiences, and exists only for a subject who carries out this identification.<sup>58</sup>

'The 'lived body' is always 'its personal body' and not that of another person because the 'lived body' gives the person a particular perspective on the world'.<sup>59</sup> We *are* our bodies and we perceive ourselves as being bodies.<sup>60</sup>

Both Merleau-Ponty and subsequently Pierre Bourdieu conceived of the relation between mind and body as beyond that of a simple unity. Marcoulatos has suggested that there are conceptual parallels between the work of Bourdieu and Merleau-Ponty:

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<sup>55</sup> Maurice Merleau Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (Routledge, first published 1945, 2002 ed) 158.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid* 235.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid* 246.

<sup>59</sup> Georg Meggle and Andreas Mundt, *Analyōmen 2: Logic, Epistemology, Philosophy of Science* (Walter de Gruyter, 1997) 112 citing Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (Routledge, 1962) 417.

<sup>60</sup> Taylor Carman, 'The Body in Husserl and Merleau Ponty' (1999) 27(2) *Philosophical Topics* 205, 206

They both see embodied significance—in the form of the multifaceted actuality of the lived body—as the mediating ground between these theoretical divisions; the experience of the lived body is the de facto dissolution of the subject/ object dichotomy which is the key target in the work of both thinkers.<sup>61</sup>

Marcoulatos argued a possible equivalence between Bourdieu's *habitus* and Merleau-Ponty's *phenomenal body*.<sup>62</sup> Conversely, Iris Young, adopting Merleau-Ponty's insights about the lived body in her essay on feminine bodily existence, considered Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* as one interpretation of the relation of social structures to bodies, but thought that Bourdieu's understanding of this relation conceptualised the structures 'too rigidly and ahistorically'.<sup>63</sup>

Notwithstanding this concern, the complex relationship of Bourdieu's habitus-field-practice apparatus is of particular relevance to this thesis as it provides a useful tool to analyse the ways in which women come to embody gender relations.

### **Bourdieu and the practice-habitus-capital-field complex**

Bourdieu used the concepts of habitus, field, and practice as ideas to grasp what have all too often been treated as antithetical – even antagonistic – categories: namely, the categories of 'structure' and 'agency'. He stated that '[o]f all the oppositions that artificially divide social science, the most fundamental, and the most ruinous, is the one set up between subjectivism and objectivism'.<sup>64</sup> Bourdieu's practice-habitus-field framework provides a means of understanding the ways human beings come to be certain people, doing particular things in relationships with other human beings. In this respect, he is able to address not only the ways in which identity is formed, but also how a given aspect of identity may be transformed.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Iordanis Marcoulatos, 'Merleau-Ponty and Bourdieu on *Embodied Significance*' (2001) 31 *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 1, 1.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid 2.

<sup>63</sup> Iris M Young, *On Female Body Experience: "Throwing Like a Girl" and Other Essays* (Oxford University Press, 2005) 26.

<sup>64</sup> Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, above n 5, 25.

<sup>65</sup> Several commentators have cautioned however that there is a risk that scholars will adopt a thematic approach to Bourdieu's terms, which ignores the inter-connectedness of key concepts: practice habitus, field and capital, for example, Toril Moi, *What is a Woman and Other Essays* (Oxford University Press, 2001) 398.



Scholars who focused attention on practical action have influenced the structure-agency debate. Bourdieu is a theorist of 'practice' who is intensely interested in the interactive and routine recognisable activities that individuals engage in on a daily basis. Bourdieu has also been interested in embodied practices achieved by bodily movements. He treated practice as having simultaneous objective and subjective qualities. In his hands, the core idea of practice is understood as a relational category whereby practice results from the inter-relationship of habitus, capital, and fields. This relationship is represented by the equation: Practice = Habitus + Capital + Field.

## Practice

Habitus is history incorporated. It is generated in individual and collective practices in particular social fields. We all take part in day-to-day or routine activities, which are the result of the relation between our individual agency and the social structures with which we come into contact. In a cyclical way, the culture of the field in which those activities take place results from the ongoing individual and collective participation into those practices. This is the way that social structures are embodied or somatised. Useful examples of social practice include sport and other physical activities such as self-defence. Sportspeople and other persons practice certain movements and responses they need to participate in that activity until those movements become second nature and saturate the body. Bourdieu explained that:

the logic whereby agents incline towards this or that sporting practice cannot be understood unless their dispositions towards sport, which are themselves one dimension of *particular relation to the body*, are reinserted into the unity of the system of dispositions, the habitus, which is the basis from which lifestyles are generated.<sup>66</sup>

For example, elite footballers will develop and share a similar habitus or 'feel for the game': for example, expectations on the field, movements that have become 'second nature' through practice, 'knowing' the body movement required to propel a ball over a specific distance, and so on. The arrangements in the field are bodily reproduced through their individual and collective practice and internalised in individual habitus.

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<sup>66</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, 'Sport and Social Class' (1978) 17 *Social Science Information* 819, 833.

However, because their intentions to act are aligned with the field they enter, the practices that result from acting on those intentions tend to reproduce the existing arrangements of the field and become the 'natural' order of things.<sup>67</sup> Practice therefore reproduces and legitimates the habitus or system of dispositions, which enables a process through which culture is embodied and replicated by individuals.

## Field

Bourdieu used the idea of a 'field' or 'field of action' to illuminate the relationship between individual practice, and the social context in which individual practice is accomplished: for example, fields as varied as politics, education, museums, or the production of restaurant food. Webb, Schirato, and Danaher explained that a field is a 'series of institutions, rules, rituals, conventions, categories, designations, appointments and titles which constitute an objective hierarchy, and which produce and authorise certain discourses and activities'.<sup>68</sup>

Fields produce networks of social relations within which the persons who enter the field develop their individual practices. Bourdieu himself often referred to the field as a 'game':

You can use the analogy of the game in order to say that a set of people take part in a rule-bound activity, an activity which, without necessarily being the produce of obedience to rules, obeys certain regularities..... In the game you can't do just anything and get away with it. And the feel for the game, which contributes to this necessity and this logic, is a way of knowing this necessity and this logic.....The social game is regulated, it is the locus of certain regularities. Things happen in regular fashion to it: rich heirs regularly marry rich younger daughters. That does not mean it is a rule.<sup>69</sup>

Essentially, fields are approximately autonomous, each possessing their own 'rules of the game' or organising principles,<sup>70</sup> although fields may overlap to a certain extent, such as politics and law, or education and other disciplines. As individuals engage in

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<sup>67</sup> Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, above n 5, 67.

<sup>68</sup> Jen Webb, Tony Schirato, and Geoff Danaher, *Understanding Bourdieu* (Allen and Unwin, 2002), 21-22.

<sup>69</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology* (Stanford University Press, 1990) 64.

<sup>70</sup> Chris Shilling, 'Physical Capital and Situated Action: A New Direction for Corporeal Sociology' (2004) 25(4) *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 473, 475.

practice in the field, they develop durable ‘dispositions’ (values, thoughts, beliefs, feelings, tastes, body movements) specific to each field that becomes habituated.<sup>71</sup> Some of these dispositions are shaped by the position the individual occupies in the field; namely, whether he or she is either dominant or dominated in the field. Other dispositions are acquired through the person’s engagement in the field.

Through this process, people develop a sense of what is required to engage in the field, such as particular body movements or ways of speaking. This is more, or less, habitus.

Fields only exist when they are constituted by the people or agents who participate in them. However, fields are also competitive spaces. Any field is marked by tension or conflict between the interests of different individuals and groups<sup>72</sup> who struggle to gain control over a field’s capital. Capital is the form of power that people hold in social fields. The aim of the struggle in the field is to maintain or increase individual or group capital and dominate the other participants.<sup>73</sup> So, fields are also created out of the struggle between individual and groups over what amounts to meaningful ‘capital’ in the particular field, as well as who will have control over that capital and the power it affords.<sup>74</sup>

## **Habitus**

Bourdieu described habitus as second nature.<sup>75</sup> The concept of habitus works to explain how it is that we behave in predictable and particular ways that feel natural. In Bourdieu’s words, habitus is the ‘feel’ for the game. Habitus is apparent in how we move, dress, speak, and occupy space.<sup>76</sup> ‘What is learned by the body’ is not something one ‘has’, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one ‘is’.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Moi, above n 65, 270.

<sup>72</sup> Lois McNay, ‘Gender, Habitus and the Field’ (1999) 16 *Theory, Culture & Society* 95, 112.

<sup>73</sup> Moi, above n 65, 270.

<sup>74</sup> Webb et al, above n 68, 21-22.

<sup>75</sup> Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, above n 5, 56.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

Habitus therefore also both ‘enacts the past’<sup>78</sup> and is an ongoing history of ‘individual and collective’<sup>79</sup> practice in specific fields.<sup>80</sup> It is ongoing simply because we are always in the process of making history. Bourdieu described habitus as ‘history turned into nature.’<sup>81</sup> It is a lasting system of experiences, perceptions,<sup>82</sup> preferences, beliefs, and actions referred to as dispositions that are instilled from childhood through family, education, and social background, and that have become habitual.<sup>83</sup>

The key aspect of habitus is that it is embodied: it is the ‘socialised body.’<sup>84</sup> History and experience are lived through the body, which is therefore in a constant state of transition as each new experience is incorporated. As Bourdieu explained, ‘[t]he body is in the social world but the social world is in the body.’<sup>85</sup> Bourdieu sometimes used the term *hexis* to refer to the embodied nature of the habitus:

Bodily hexis is political mythology realized, embodied, turned into a permanent disposition, a, durable way of standing, speaking, walking and thereby feeling and thinking. The opposition between male and female is realized in posture, in gestures and movements of the body, in the form of opposition between the straight and the bent, between firmness and uprightness and directness, and restraint and flexibility.<sup>86</sup>

Bourdieu drew on Merleau-Ponty’s pre-reflective body in his conceptualisation of the habitus, which works at a pre-conscious level. As an individual participates in a field, he or she internalises the objective social structures to the extent that they become the individual’s own set of cognitive and embodied dispositions.<sup>87</sup> Once somatised, these structures operate pre-consciously,<sup>88</sup> and the internalised structures then correspond with the objective structures or requirements of the field.<sup>89</sup> Individuals respond to the

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid 54.

<sup>80</sup> Moi above n 65, 270-271.

<sup>81</sup> Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, above n 5, 78.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid 10.

<sup>83</sup> Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, above n 5

<sup>84</sup> Bourdieu, *Practical Reason*, above n 6, 81.

<sup>85</sup> Pierre Bourdieu cited in Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, (University of Chicago Press, 1992) 20, note 35.

<sup>86</sup> Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, above n 5, 69-70.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Loïc Wacquant, ‘Towards a Reflexive Sociology: a Workshop with Pierre Bourdieu’ (1989) 7(1) *Sociological Theory* 26-63, 45.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

requirements of the field in particular ways<sup>90</sup> because this is required for membership of the field, and these responses become habitual.<sup>91</sup>

As habitus is the socially-made body, 'it is "at home" in the field it inhabits, it perceives it immediately as endowed with meaning and interest'.<sup>92</sup> In other words, '... when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it is like a "fish in water": it does not feel the weight of the water, and it takes the world about itself for granted'.<sup>93</sup> That being the case, habitus is also the mechanism through which inequality is realised via class, gender, and race. As Bourdieu explained:

When, owing to the quasi-perfect fit between the objective structures and the internalized structures which results from the logic of simple reproduction, the established cosmological and political order is perceived not as arbitrary, i.e. as one possible order among others, but as a self-evident and natural order which goes without saying and therefore goes unquestioned, the agent's aspirations have the same limits as the objective conditions of which they are the product.<sup>94</sup>

Habitus does not merely reproduce history through the body, however: it is also generative.<sup>95</sup> Habitus 'structures new experiences in accordance with the structures produced by past experiences, which are modified by the new experiences within the limits defined by their power of selection'.<sup>96</sup> The constraints imposed by habitus are not absolute.<sup>97</sup> Bourdieu denied that the theory of habitus excluded individual choice,<sup>98</sup> but he cautioned that 'it is habitus itself that commands this option [of "rational choice"]'.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Matthew Adam, 'Hybridizing Habitus and Reflexivity: Towards an Understanding of Contemporary Identity' (2006) 40(4) *Sociology* 511, 514.

<sup>91</sup> David Brown and Alan Johnson, 'The Social Practice of Self-Defense Martial Arts: Applications for Physical Education' (2000) 52 *QUEST* 246, 247.

<sup>92</sup> Wacquant, above n 88, 45.

<sup>93</sup> Bourdieu and Wacquant, above n 85, 127.

<sup>94</sup> Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, above n 5, 166.

<sup>95</sup> Lisa Adkins, 'Reflexivity: Freedom or Habit of Gender?' (2004) 52(2) *Sociological Review* 191, 193; Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, above n 5, 78.

<sup>96</sup> Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, above n 5, 60.

<sup>97</sup> Desmond Manderson and Sarah Turner, 'Coffee House: Habitus and Performance Among Law Students' (2006) 31 (3) *Law and Social Inquiry* 649, 671.

<sup>98</sup> Wacquant, above n 88, 45.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

The individual is always, whether he likes it or not, trapped- save to the extent that he becomes aware of it ‘within the limits of his brain’ ... within the limits of the system of categories he owes to his upbringing and training.<sup>100</sup>

Accordingly, this suggests that while the habitus remains constant over time, it is not permanent and is capable of transformation. Webb, Schirato, and Danaher explained that:

... habitus is both durable and oriented towards the practical; dispositions, knowledges and values are always potentially subject to modification, rather than being passively consumed or reinscribed. This occurs when the narratives, values and explanations of a habitus no longer make sense... or ...when agents use their understanding and feel for the rules of the game as a means of furthering and improving their own standing and capital within a cultural field.<sup>101</sup>

The relation between habitus and field is all-important. The motivation for action ‘resides in the relation between the habitus and the field, which means that the habitus contributes to determining what determines it’.<sup>102</sup> The relationship between field and habitus is, accordingly, a bilateral one. The field is only given meaning, and therefore only exists, because of the agents and institutions that constitute the field, while the field only exists because of agents’ participation in that field. Bourdieu described the relationship between field and habitus as a ‘genuine ontological complicity’: history enters into a relation with itself.<sup>103</sup> Wacquant explained that:

[t]he relation between the social agent and the world is not that between a subject (or a consciousness) and an object, but a relation of “ontological complicity”- or mutual “possession” as Bourdieu recently put it – between habitus, as the socially constituted principle of perception and appreciation, and the world, which determines it.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Bourdieu and Wacquant, above n 85, 126.

<sup>101</sup> Webb et al, above n 68, 41.

<sup>102</sup> Bourdieu, *In Other Words*, above n 69, 195.

<sup>103</sup> Bourdieu and Wacquant, above n 85, 128.

<sup>104</sup> Bourdieu and Wacquant, above n 85, 20.

## Capital

The fourth category in Bourdieu's conceptual apparatus is capital. Bourdieu has defined capital, in terms borrowed from Marx, as 'accumulated labour (in its materialized form or its incorporated, embodied form which, when appropriated on a private, that is, exclusive basis by agents or groups of agents, enable them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor.'<sup>105</sup> Capital, therefore, is power that individuals hold or appropriate in social fields, which manifests in different forms.

An individual's ability to accrue capital is proportionate to their social position, which means that these forms of capital only have power in the social fields in which they are valued.<sup>106</sup> A person's power to accrue any form of capital that is regarded as legitimate in the particular social field in which they are engaged will, therefore, more or less correspond with that person's social position.<sup>107</sup>

Bourdieu distinguished between three major forms of capital: economic, cultural, and social capital.<sup>108</sup> These capital forms are 'inter-convertible', which means that they may be converted or transformed into one another.<sup>109</sup> Economic capital, for example, is made up of assets and resources that are convertible into money or other financial gain or property interests such as land. The second main form of capital, cultural capital, occurs in three states: embodied (dispositions), objectified (material, cultural goods), and institutionalised forms, for example in the form of academic credentials<sup>110</sup> (certificates of 'cultural competence'),<sup>111</sup> or more informal qualifications. For example, Hobbs, O'Brien, and Westmarland<sup>112</sup> considered the concept of cultural capital in relation to the emergent participation of women in security work, or 'bouncing'. Hobbs, O'Brien and Westmarland found that the cultural capital of

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<sup>105</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', in John G Richardson (ed) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (Greenwood Press, 1986) 46.

<sup>106</sup> Susan Thieme and Karin Astrid Siegman, 'Coping on Women's backs: Social Capital-Vulnerability Links through a Gender Lens', (2010) 58(1) *Current Sociology* 715, 724.

<sup>107</sup> Holly Thorpe, 'Bourdieu, Feminism and Female Physical Culture: Gender Reflexivity and the Habitus-Field Complex', (2009) 26 *Sociology of Sport Journal* 491.

<sup>108</sup> Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital, above n 105, 47; Thieme and Siegman, above n 106, 723.

<sup>109</sup> Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital, above n 105, 55; Thieme and Siegman, above n 106, 723.

<sup>110</sup> Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital, above n 105, 47-48.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>112</sup> Dick Hobbs, Kate O'Brien and Louise Westmarland, 'Connecting the Gendered Door: Women, Violence and Door Work,' (2007) 58(1) *The British Journal of Sociology* 21.

female bouncers, referred to as 'The Connected' by the authors, related to the methods those women used to control licensed premises.<sup>113</sup>

The authors argued that violence has had a meaningful role in the lives of working-class males: '[t]oughness and violent ability are ... key attributes and ideals within working-class masculinities, and working-class cultural capital situates violence centrally in concepts of the male self ... as a personal resource that informs social interaction and performance'.<sup>114</sup> The female bouncers under study had similar backgrounds that largely inured them to violence and violent encounters. These connections were as important for these women as they might be for male security workers as they shared similar cultural capital, which was convertible into economic capital.<sup>115</sup>

However, while they exhibited a 'form of practical consciousness, which include[d] masculine associated aspects relating to violence, 'they remained socially coded as feminine'.<sup>116</sup> In their words:

... [i]t is a blending of this gendered social coding with their cultural capital, and not the social coding in isolation that makes them commercially viable as specialists of violence.<sup>117</sup>

Women boxers in Halbert's case study of female professional boxers balanced one form of physical capital in their feminine appearance, which enhanced their marketability, and therefore the exchange for economic capital; while exhibiting hyper-masculinity in the ring in order to earn respect and legitimatise the acquisition of this second form of physical capital.<sup>118</sup>

Social capital is about the benefits derived from social networks and relationships - for example, being member of a particular family or as alumni of a particular school or university.<sup>119</sup> How much social capital an individual possesses, therefore, will depend on the how effectively the individual can draw on those networks as well as

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid 23.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid 34.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid .

<sup>118</sup> Christy Halbert, 'Tough Enough and Woman Enough: Stereotypes, Discrimination, and Impression Management among Women Professional Boxers' (1997) 21(7) *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 7.

<sup>119</sup> Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', above n 105, 51.



the form, and the extent of capital held by others.<sup>120</sup> Recently, Thieme and Siegman used the concept of social capital as an analytic tool in theorising the gendered nexus between social capital and vulnerability in the situation social networks set up by migrant women.<sup>121</sup> Social capital may also be political.<sup>122</sup>

There has been some interest in the body as a form of physical capital<sup>123</sup> - the size, shape, and appearance of the flesh<sup>124</sup> - but also the instrumental and kinetic qualities of the body in relation to physical education and sporting contexts.<sup>125</sup> Shilling provided the following definition:

The production of physical capital refers to the development of bodies in ways which are recognized as possessing value in social fields, while the conversion of physical capital refers to the translation of bodily participation in work, leisure and other fields into different forms of capital.<sup>126</sup>

The value of physical capital is in its conversion potentialities: that is, into social, cultural, or economic capital. For example, girls' physical capital in their sporting competence may be convertible to social capital, manifested in attention, popularity or status = albeit temporary status.<sup>127</sup> Several writers have also worked from the assumption that sports like boxing demand physical capital'.<sup>128</sup> Certainly, there is capital in the body as an instrument. The instrumental value of the body is highlighted in the field of boxing and certainly other sports in which the body is both apparatus and locus of action. Boxers in Wacquant's work on a boxing gym in Chicago

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Thieme and Siegman, above n 106.

<sup>122</sup> Thorpe, 'Bourdieu, Feminism and Female Physical Culture', above n 107; Kimberley L Casey 'Defining Political Capital: A Reconsideration of Pierre Bourdieu's Interconvertibility Theory' (paper presented at the Illinois State University Conference for Students of Political Science, Normal, Illinois, April 4, 2008) <http://lilt.ilstu.edu/critique/spring%202008/casey.pdf> ; Bourdieu, *An Outline of a Theory*, above n 5.

<sup>123</sup> Shilling, 'Physical Capital', above n 70; Thorpe, 'Bourdieu, Feminism and Female Physical Culture' above n 107.

<sup>124</sup> Shilling, 'Physical Capital', above n 70, 474.

<sup>125</sup> Shilling, 'Physical Capital', above n 70; Thorpe, 'Bourdieu, Feminism and Female Physical Culture' above n 107.

<sup>126</sup> Chris Shilling, 'The Body, Class and Social Inequalities', in John Evans (ed) *Equality, Equity and Physical Education* (Routledge, 1993) 55.

<sup>127</sup> Laura Hills, 'Friendship, Physicality, and Physical Education: An Exploration of the Social and Embodied Dynamics of Girls' Physical Education Experiences' (2007) 12 (3) *Sport, Education and Society*, 317, 325

<sup>128</sup> Kath Woodward, *Boxing, Masculinity and Identity: The 'I' of the Tiger* (Routledge, 2007) 53.

regarded their bodies as machines, tools, weapons and shields, requiring care, maintenance, and sometimes visual enhancement.<sup>129</sup>

More recently, Hakim has suggested erotic capital as an independent fourth significant form of capital.<sup>130</sup> Any of these forms of capital may also be symbolic, for example, individual prestige and the respect of others, distinction or honour. Symbolic capital will differ according to what is valued in the particular field. For example, elite footballers will possess considerable physical capital but also have accrued symbolic capital in terms of individual abilities (style, competency, bravado) in physically demanding tasks, which then legitimatises the value of the physical capital.

### **Practice, habitus, field, capital, and gender**

The concept of the habitus helps in understanding gender as practice – the unconscious habits through which we perform femininity or masculinity. Although Bourdieu's concepts have been criticised as androcentric,<sup>131</sup> feminist scholars have been interested in working with Bourdieu's conceptual framework to understand gender relations, as well as identity.<sup>132</sup> In particular, Bourdieu's work can be used to interpret women's embodied gender experiences. Hills for example has drawn on Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and fields and re-interpretations of his work in considering girls' experience of gendered physicality in the context of physical education, in particular the potential for behaviours that might subvert traditional and disempowering perceptions about female physicality.<sup>133</sup> Thorpe recently considered

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<sup>129</sup> Loïc Wacquant, 'The Prizefighter's Three Bodies' (1998) 63(3) *Ethnos* 325.

<sup>130</sup> Catherine Hakim, 'Erotic Capital' (2010) 26(5) *European Sociological Review* 499, 499.

<sup>131</sup> Leslie McCall, 'Does Gender Fit? Bourdieu, Feminism and Conceptions of Social Order' (1992) 21(6) *Theory and Society* 837, 839.

<sup>132</sup> McCall, above n 131; Diane Reay, 'Feminist Theory, Habitus, and Social Class: Disrupting Notions of Classlessness' (1997) 20(2) *Women's Studies International Forum* 225; Judith Butler, 'Performativity's Social Magic' in R Shusterman (ed) *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1999) 113; Lois McNay, 'Gender, Habitus and the Field', above n 72; Lois McNay, *Gender and Agency: Reconfiguring the Subject in Feminist and Social Theory* (Polity Press, 2000); Lisa Adkins and Beverley Skeggs, *Feminism After Bourdieu* (Blackwell Publishing, 2004); Terry Lovell, 'Thinking Feminism With and Against Bourdieu' (2000) 1(1) *Feminist Theory* 11; Adkins, above n 95.

<sup>133</sup> Hills, above n 127.

the relevance of a feminist reading of the habitus, field, capital, practice matrix in relation to male gender reflexivity in sport and physical culture.<sup>134</sup>

According to Bourdieu, hierarchical gender relations are embedded in bodily *hexis*.<sup>135</sup> He explained that:

...girls internalize, in the form of schemes of perception and appreciation not readily accessible to consciousness, the principles of the dominant vision, which lead them to find the social order, such as it is, normal or even natural and in a sense to anticipate their destiny, refusing the courses or careers from which they are anyway excluded and rushing towards those for which they are in any case destined. The constancy of habitus that results from this is thus one of the most important factors in the relative constancy of the structure of the sexual division of labour.<sup>136</sup>

In traditional sociology however, the construct of the social role - for example, 'woman', 'parent', or 'teacher' – assumes that individuals perform pre-existing social roles.<sup>137</sup> When applied to sex role theory, gender identity is therefore externally imposed and fixed by the extent of the role to be performed. Kraus pointed out that this construct fails to account for the omnipresence of gender or the processual nature of 'doing gender.'<sup>138</sup> She argued that socialised individuals are constructed differently within the concept of habitus than within the social role construct. Bourdieu's practice-habitus-capital-field framework, therefore, offered an alternative to the social role concept that assumed identity is imposed on individuals.

First, Kraus pointed out that gender is experienced in body *and* mind and habitus tend to focus attention on the body.<sup>139</sup> Gender is also pervasive in all social settings but gender practice differs in different fields.<sup>140</sup> According to Bourdieu, 'gender is an absolutely fundamental dimension of the habitus that, like the sharps and clefs in music, modifies all the social qualities that are connected to the fundamental social

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<sup>134</sup> Holly Thorpe, 'Bourdieu, Gender Reflexivity, and Physical Culture: A Case of Masculinities in the Snowboarding Field' (2010) 34 *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 176.

<sup>135</sup> McNay, 'Gender, Habitus and the Field', above n 72, 100.

<sup>136</sup> Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination* (Stanford University Press, 2001) 95.

<sup>137</sup> Beate Kraus, 'Gender, Sociological Theory and Bourdieu's Sociology of Practice', (2006) 23 *Theory Culture Society* 119, 125.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid*, 126.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid*, 127-8.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid* 128.

factors.’<sup>141</sup> Finally, Kraiss argued that Bourdieu’s concept of habitus is based on the active participation of the individual in the social world.<sup>142</sup>

For Bourdieu, every individual is a socialized individual, within whose habitus there exists fundamental dimensions of the social, that is, of the historical society in which he or she lives, and every person acts within the horizon of possibilities delimited by this context. The individuals born into a particular historical society incorporate that society into their habitus through their practice with the social world in which they live, think and act. Everything that is passed down and incorporated within them, they carry on, change, and vary; and sometimes they even revolutionize elements of their world.<sup>143</sup>

Essentially, gendered habitus is the ‘social construction of masculinity and femininity that shapes the body, defines how the body is perceived, forms the body’s habits and possibilities for expression and thus determines the individual’s identity via the body as masculine *or* feminine.’<sup>144</sup> In other words, there are elements of identity that are inscribed.

In understanding myself as a woman, my body is inescapable. Thus to try to understand masculinity and femininity, male and female, through a distinction which asks us to ignore the physicality of our bodies, is highly problematic.<sup>145</sup>

Chambers noted that it made sense to conceptualise a gendered habitus because the different ways men and women ‘hold and use their bodies is not solely explicable by biology’<sup>146</sup> although Kraiss cautioned that ‘it is ...through the habitus that the gender classification, like every other social institution, is kept alive.’<sup>147</sup>

The relationship between gender and habitus in recent feminist work has tended to take two forms.<sup>148</sup> The first approach assumes that social fields were differentiated by gender as well as by class and race. Habitus is formed within this relationship as well

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<sup>141</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, ‘Eine sanfte Gewalt. Pierre Bourdieu im Gespräch mit Irene Dölling und Margareta Steinrücke, in Irene Dölling and Beate Kraiss (eds) *Ein alltägliches Spiel. Geschlechterkonstruktion in der sozialen Praxis* 218, 222 translated by Beate Kraiss.

<sup>142</sup> Kraiss, above n 137, 129.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid 129.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid 121.

<sup>145</sup> Carrie Paechter, ‘Reconceptualizing the Gendered Body: Learning and Constructing Masculinities and Femininities in School’ (2006) 18(2) *Gender and Education* 121, 126.

<sup>146</sup> Clare Chambers, ‘Masculine Domination, Radical Feminism and Change Transformation’ (2005) 6 *Feminist Theory* 325.

<sup>147</sup> Kraiss, above n 137, 124.

<sup>148</sup> Julie McLeod, ‘Feminists Re-reading Bourdieu: Old Debates and New Questions About Gender Habitus and Gender Change’ (2005) 3 *Theory and Research in Education* 11.

as by the ‘unequal distribution of different forms of capital. The second approach presumes that ‘subjective dispositions can be gendered’.<sup>149</sup>

Bourdieu holds that the magnified masculine image propagates itself through the repeated, and therefore confirming, vision or observation of socially constructed gender imprints on the material body. Social agents assume this differentiated image to be natural, thus setting up a “circular causality” of observation, somatization, and naturalization.<sup>150</sup>

Physical qualities mean different things when they are performed as part of a masculine or feminine habitus and these are expressed and emphasised in the different ways of performing sexed bodies in physical contexts (for example, in social spaces where physical education is taking place). This process can be conceptualised as the ‘production of gendered habitus and symbolic domination in which social power-relations are maintained’.<sup>151</sup>

Gender relations are somatised as men and women embody ‘the conditions of their own domination and dominance’<sup>152</sup> and perceive these conditions as legitimate. For example, I approach some physical tasks such as pull-ups<sup>153</sup> expecting to fail even after repeated practice, because these tasks have largely been created out of practice with stronger, more muscular male bodies, and I have been told many times that most women find these activities physically difficult. I am conditioned to failure through the exertion of symbolic or ‘gentle’ violence.<sup>154</sup>

Bourdieu explained that:

it is an arbitrary construction of the male and female body, of its uses and functions, especially in biological reproduction, which gives an apparently natural foundation to the androcentric view of the division of sexual labour...The particular strength of the masculine sociodicy comes from the fact that it combines and condenses two

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid 19.

<sup>150</sup> David Brown, ‘Pierre Bourdieu’s “Masculine Domination Thesis” and the Gendered Body in Sport and Physical Culture’ (2006) 23 *Sociology of Sport Journal* 162, 168.

<sup>151</sup> Päivi Berg and Elina Lahelma, ‘Gendering Processes in the Field of Physical Education’ (2010) 22(1) *Gender and Education* 31.

<sup>152</sup> Brown, ‘Pierre Bourdieu’s “Masculine Domination Thesis”’, above n 150, 170.

<sup>153</sup> Sometimes referred to as chin ups.

<sup>154</sup> Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, above n 136, 1-2.

operations: *it legitimates a relationship of domination by embedding it in a biological nature that is itself a naturalized social construction.*<sup>155</sup>

Other writers have also considered the relationship between capital and gender.

## Capital and gender

Gender is generally excluded as a form of capital in itself,<sup>156</sup> but it has been argued that some gendered dispositions are forms of cultural capital.<sup>157</sup> In other words, while forms of capital correspond to types of fields, forms of capital have ‘gendered meanings because they are given form by *gendered dispositions*’.<sup>158</sup> Accordingly, there are some dispositions that are forms of embodied, gendered cultural capital, such as bodily appearance<sup>159</sup> or femininity.<sup>160</sup> McCall explained that:

... [w]omen who have feminine-sexual cultural capital, in a culture dominated by heterosexuality, cannot escape the consequences of such capital when compared to other types of cultural capital, such as educational qualifications (feminine beauty = no brains).<sup>161</sup>

Women could, however, acquire masculine gendered capital by assuming the necessary masculine qualities required for the job. Mennesson extended this idea in a study of women boxers, and was interested in identifying how women engaged in boxing and the types of identities they formed through participation.<sup>162</sup>

Gender habitus has also been conceived as recognisable as physical capital. Brown conceptualised a process through which individuals entered the gendered field of physical education, and a resultant gendered habitus is generated through physical education practice, which is convertible into physical capital.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid 23 (emphasis added).

<sup>156</sup> McCall, above n 131.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid 845.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid 842.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid 844.

<sup>160</sup> Thorpe, ‘Bourdieu, Feminism and Female Physical Culture’, above n 107.

<sup>161</sup> McCall, above n 131, 845.

<sup>162</sup> Christine Mennesson, ‘“Hard” Women and “Soft” Women: The Social Construction of Identities among Female Boxers’ (2000) 35 *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 21.

<sup>163</sup> David Brown, ‘An Economy of Gendered Practices? Learning to Teach Physical Education from the Perspective of Pierre Bourdieu’s Embodied Sociology’ (2005) 10 (1) *Sport, Education and Society* 3.

Physical capital is also gendered.<sup>164</sup> Qualities associated with masculinity include competitiveness, muscular physique, particular displays of physical ability, ‘coded emotional displays’, and a ‘willing acceptance of physical contact, pain, and effort in sport’.<sup>165</sup> Sparkes et al described a ‘jock’ habitus in physical education students and showed the exchange value of physical capital in this context was gendered.<sup>166</sup> Not only were there fewer opportunities for women to convert physical capital to social capital but the physical capital of female ‘jocks’ had less value than the physical capital of male ‘jocks’, which further limited their ability to exchange this for other forms of capital.<sup>167</sup>

Women may however, have to write off aspects of one form of capital against another. For example, Thorpe argued that women who valued feminine capital in the field of snowboarding risked being devalued as ‘snow bunnies’, peripheral to the sport while those who wanted to accrue power through masculine capital, for example risk taking, physical ability, and commitment, risked accusations of butch lesbianism.<sup>168</sup>

## Gendered field

Bourdieu treated gender as a secondary principle of division of fields.<sup>169</sup> There has been relatively little discussion of the concept of a ‘gendered field’. Moi briefly considered the possibility of a field of gender but suggested that gender would be better conceptualised as *part* of a field:

Bourdieu’s analysis of the oppression of women as a matter of *habitus* and symbolic violence would seem logically to presuppose the idea of a *field*. If gender has a *habitus*, there must, surely be a field (*champ*) in which this *habitus* can come into play. But how can one conceptualise a field of gender?... It is true that gender seems never to operate

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<sup>164</sup> Thorpe, ‘Bourdieu, Feminism and Female Physical Culture’, above n 123; Shilling, above n 72; Brown, ‘An Economy of Gendered Practices’, above n 163, 10.

<sup>165</sup> Brown, ‘An Economy of Gendered Practices’ above n 163, 10.

<sup>166</sup> Andrew C Sparkes, Elizabeth Partington, and David H K Brown, ‘Bodies as Bearers of Value: the Transmission of Jock Culture via the ‘Twelve Commandments’ (2007) 12(3) *Sport, Education and Society* 295.

<sup>167</sup> Brown, ‘An Economy of Gendered Practices’, above n 163, 313- 314.

<sup>168</sup> Thorpe, ‘Bourdieu, Feminism and Female Physical Culture’ above n 107, 495.

<sup>169</sup> Thorpe, ‘Bourdieu, Feminism and Female Physical Culture’ above n 107; McCall, above n 131; McNay ‘Gender, Habitus and the Field’, above n 72, 112.

separately from all other fields. But it does not seem impossible to argue that gender might be theorized in much the same way as social class, that is to say that we might claim that- like class- gender is part of a field, but that this field is the general social field, rather than any specific field of gender<sup>170</sup>

Krais later pointed out that gender is an essential dimension of the habitus,<sup>171</sup> which meant that gender is not a specific field of itself, but rather is part of a field because gender is relational and has different significance in different fields.<sup>172</sup> Yet, if gender is an essential aspect of women's habitus, this tends to beg the question of the origin of the gendered habitus, particularly if the assumption is that habitus adapts to the field it encounters.<sup>173</sup> One explanation is that fields are structured as gendered, for example, the gendered field of physical education.<sup>174</sup> Indeed, any field constructed around features of masculinity such as boxing and rugby, or femininity as seen in beauty pageants or rhythmic gymnastics might all be conceptualised as gendered in structure. Chambers took this further and suggested that 'gendered habitus develops in response to all fields'<sup>175</sup> because gender rules are entrenched in all fields, even if they are not necessarily the same in each field.

Boxing is an example of a strongly gendered field, as it remains a highly masculinised environment.<sup>176</sup> Bodies are significant for boxers because 'boxers *are* their bodies'<sup>177</sup> 'both as the fit, successful body and... through the threat of the damaged body that every boxer fears... boxers gain success and status by taking control of their bodies through rigorous training regimens'.<sup>178</sup> Boxing epitomises the materiality of the body and concept of 'lived' bodies.<sup>179</sup> However, boxers' bodies are also 'gendered bodies'.<sup>180</sup> As Woodward observed, boxing masculinities share characteristics of traditional hegemonic masculinity.<sup>181</sup> The field of boxing 'is a clearly gendered sport predicated on traditional masculine characteristics of body contact, violence danger

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<sup>170</sup> Moi above n 65, 288.

<sup>171</sup> Krais, above n 137, 128.

<sup>172</sup> Adkins, above n 95, 6.

<sup>173</sup> Chambers, above n 146.

<sup>174</sup> Brown, 'An Economy of Gendered Practices', above n 163.

<sup>175</sup> Chambers, above n 146, 332.

<sup>176</sup> Kath Woodward, *Boxing, Masculinity and Identity: The Í 'of the Tiger'* (Routledge, 2007) 2.

<sup>177</sup> Kath Woodward, 'Hanging Out and Hanging About: Insider/Outsider Research in the Sport Of Boxing' (2008) 9 *Ethnography* 536, 544.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid 542.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid 543.

<sup>180</sup> Woodward 'Hanging Out and Hanging About', above n 177, 543.

<sup>181</sup> Woodward, *Boxing, Masculinity and Identity*, above n 176, 2.



(and by association, courage)'.<sup>182</sup> In boxing, masculinities such as control and bodily discipline 'are made and remade through the body practices of routine'.<sup>183</sup>

Gender, therefore, permeates all facets of Bourdieu's matrix.

## Conclusion

I am concerned with three key questions in my thesis. Firstly, why do women's self-portraits as passive, physically weak, vulnerable, and defensive feel so natural? Second, what do these self-concepts mean for women in physically threatening situations such as harassment and assault? Finally, can women deliberately change these aspects of their identity through a form of bodily re-education?

As I indicated in my introduction, I set out to address the first of these questions in this chapter. I have shown that Bourdieu's theoretical framework offers a more productive approach to explaining why women understand themselves in these ways than other theories of identity such as Giddens' structuration theory or Merleau Ponty's *phenomenal* body. I have shown how Bourdieu's concepts of practice-habitus-capital-field help explain the relationship between structural/instrumental and agential forces in shaping who we are and how gendered relations are internalised and become second nature. These self-concepts are the product of our embodied histories.

In the next chapter, I address the second of my research questions and consider some of the ways in which women come to experience their physical identities - in particular, those aspects of identity that emphasise their vulnerability. I begin by reflecting on the kinds of biological and socially constructed characteristics that are attributed to women, including the ways in which women are portrayed in multi-media and sporting activities. I follow with a discussion on women's experience in physical activities such as sport and look to Bourdieu's theories as a means to understand women's experiences of their bodies in these contexts.

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid 4.

## Chapter 2      **WOMEN'S EMBODIED EXPERIENCE**

I had only ever been struck twice by another person before I began karate training almost twenty-five years ago. It happened twice and each occasion is still a vivid memory. The first incident was common in Victorian classrooms in the early 1970's - one stroke of the strap across my right palm for a misdemeanor; the nature of which I no longer recall. Later in the same year, a boy in my class punched me in the stomach during a game of British Bulldogs – a physically aggressive primary school game, later banned in many schools. I assumed he did this to signal his emergent romantic interest. At the time, the shock of the punch was crippling and I have often thought of this when I have been winded by similar blows in martial arts encounters.

I was also vividly reminded of this when one of my self-defence students froze in shock several years ago when she was kicked accidentally. Although the contact was minimal, the shock was still significant because as she told me later this was the first time she had been struck. She said she had never been physically chastised and she had never played contact sports. This student shared with me a common understanding of our gendered physical identities: as women, we are fragile and breakable.

This response points to the puzzle that is central to my thesis: why does this idea feel so natural and 'normal'? Bourdieu's habitus-field-practice complex, which I discussed in the previous chapter, offers an approach to thinking about the gendered ways women inhabit their bodies. In particular, Bourdieu highlights the connection between the 'subjective' and the 'objective' factors that inform the making of our identity. Gendered identity emerges from the somatization of social structures through participation or practice in social fields so that ways of doing and being become habitual and so become 'second-nature'.

In this chapter, I want to identify some of the particular ways that women come to understand and experience their physical identity, and do so in ways that emphasise their physical vulnerability. To do this I have surveyed and commented on a very large body of research literature, which has addressed the gendered character of physical prowess and sporting participation. I begin by reflecting on the ways certain traits are attributed to women and by implication to men by way of a range of biological and sociological categories and interpretative frames. I also want to pay attention to the gendered perceptions of role-

appropriate behavior- in particular, the ways in which women are portrayed in multi-media and sporting activities – as well as gendered perceptions about women’s physicality.

## Sex versus Gender

In the previous chapter, I briefly outlined something of the older ‘structuralist’ approaches found in the tradition of sex/gender role socialization theory.

Some of these traditional approaches used biological determinist arguments to both explain and to legitimise gendered roles and gendered social hierarchies. According to this approach, the sexual division of labour is best treated as inevitable because it is the natural outcome of men and women’s genetic and physiological make up.

In response, feminist writers such as Lorber<sup>1</sup> and Glenn<sup>2</sup> argued that sex and gender are dichotomous concepts and that there is no indispensable and incommutable relationship between women’s biological nature -what they called ‘sex’ – and their social roles, or ‘gender’. According to Lorber, feminist writers deliberately adopted the term ‘gender’ as part of an intellectual strategy.<sup>3</sup>

There were several dimensions of this strategy. First, as Glenn explained, ‘loosening the connection to concrete bodies, the notion of socially constructed gender freed us from thinking of sex/gender as solely, or even primarily a characteristic of individuals.’<sup>4</sup> Next, if gender could be conceptualised as a structure or process, which institutionalised existing inequalities between men and women’s biological roles, then the equation of ‘sex’ as ‘biology = nature = immutable’ might therefore be avoided.<sup>5</sup> It was also politically necessary to separate ‘sex’ from ‘gender’. Commentators could use gender to point out that there was

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<sup>1</sup> Judith Lorber, ‘It’s the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Do You Know What Gender You Are?’ in Vasilikie Demos and Marcia Texler Segal (eds), *International Feminist Challenge to Theory -Advances in Gender Research, Volume 5* (Emerald Group, 2001) 119; Judith Lorber, ‘Believing is Seeing: Biology as Ideology’ (1993) 7 *Gender and Society* 568; Judith Lorber, ‘Using Gender to Undo Gender: A Feminist Degendering Movement’, (2000) *Feminist Theory* 79; Judith Lorber, ‘Dismantling Noah’s Ark’ in Judith Lorber and Susan A Farrell (eds), *The Social Construction of Gender* (Sage Publications, 1991) 369.

<sup>2</sup> Evelyn Nakano Glenn, ‘The Social Construction and Institutionalization of Gender and Race: An Integrative Framework’ in Myra Marx Ferree, Judith Lorber, and Beth H Hess (eds), *Revisioning Gender* (Altamira Press, 2000) 3-43.

<sup>3</sup> Lorber, ‘It’s the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’ above n 1; See also Glenn, above n 2, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Glenn, above n 2, 5.

<sup>5</sup> Lorber, ‘It’s the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’ above n 1, 122; Lorber ‘Believing is Seeing’, above n 1; Glenn, above n 2, 6; Robert W Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, The Personal and Sexual Politics* (Stanford University Press, 1987) 71.

no essential or causal linkage between sexed bodies and gendered identity. Theoretically, gender could be used conceptually to analyse the myriad ways in which gendered identities were constructed socially.

It was clear in this process that language mattered. Conceptualising 'gender' as a construction invoked the rhetoric of de-construction,<sup>6</sup> re-construction,<sup>7</sup> of something 'done' being undone,<sup>8</sup> of de-gendering,<sup>9</sup> and of 'dismantling' or taking apart.<sup>10</sup> Gender was therefore tangible, malleable, repairable, moveable, and destructible. Otherwise as Chodorow insisted:

To see men and women as qualitatively different kinds of people, rather than seeing gender as processual, reflexive, and constructed, is to reify and deny relations of gender, to see gender as permanent, rather than created or situated.<sup>11</sup>

However, writers like Hawkesworth,<sup>12</sup> Delphy,<sup>13</sup> and Scott<sup>14</sup> expressed their concern that if nature was accepted as a fixed essence, then treating gender as a social structural phenomenon, which was imposed on existing sex differences, ended up reinforcing the biological determinism implicit in the dichotomy. It was also suggested that thinking about 'sex' and 'gender' was limited if we believe that individuals are only divisible into two groups.<sup>15</sup> As Lorber has pointed out, a significant problem was that there were no precise definitions of 'gender', 'sex' or 'sexuality'.<sup>16</sup>

More recent gender studies question both the conceptual, and the objective basis for distinguishing between sex and gender<sup>17</sup> Writers like Lorber and Hess pointed out that 'transgender', 'hermaphrodite', 'bisexual', 'gay', and 'lesbian' identities all tend to further

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<sup>6</sup> Ellen T. Armour, *Deconstruction, Feminist Theology and the Problem of Difference: Subverting the Race/Gender Divide* (University of Chicago Press, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> Lorber, 'Dismantling Noah's Ark', above n 1; Sondra Farganis, *Social Reconstruction of the Feminine Character* (Rowman and Littlefield, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> Lorber, 'Using Gender to Undo Gender', above n 1.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> For example, Lorber, 'Dismantling Noah's Ark', above n 1; Lorber, 'Using Gender to Undo Gender', above n 1.

<sup>11</sup> Nancy Chodorow, *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory* (Yale University Press, 1989) 113.

<sup>12</sup> Mary Hawkesworth, 'Confounding Gender' (1997) *Signs* 649,651-2; See also M E Bailey, 'Foucauldian Feminism: Contesting Bodies, Sexuality and Identity' in C Ramazanoglu (ed) *Up Against Foucault: Explorations of Some Tensions between Foucault and Feminism* (Routledge,1993) 100; Candace West and Don H Zimmerman, 'Doing Gender' in Lorber and Farrell (eds), *The Social Construction of Gender*, above n 1, 13, 13.

<sup>13</sup> Christine Delphy, 'Rethinking Sex and Gender' (1993) 16 *Women's Studies International Forum* 1, 3.

<sup>14</sup> Joan Wallach Scott, 'Some Reflections on Gender and Politics' in Ferree, Lorber, and Hess, above n 1, 70,72.

<sup>15</sup> Hawkesworth, above n 12.

<sup>16</sup> For example, Judith Lorber, *Paradoxes of Gender* (Yale University Press, 1994). Kate Bornstein, *Gender Outlaw: On Men Women and the Rest of Us* (Routledge, 1994) 52; Jayde Pryzgod and Joan C Chrisler, 'Definitions of Gender and Sex: The Subtleties of Meaning' (2000) 43 *Sex Roles* 553.

<sup>17</sup> See Lorber, 'It's the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' above n 1, 122; Glenn, above n 2, 5.

blur the simplistic binary distinction said to distinguish 'sex' and 'gender'.<sup>18</sup> This has resulted in thinking about gender as a more fluid concept, one not immutably restricted to 'men' and women'.<sup>19</sup> As Butler pointed out, gender can be treated as a 'free flowing artifice'<sup>20</sup> so that the terms associated with men, 'male' and 'masculine', could as easily denote the body of a woman.<sup>21</sup>

There is a good deal of evidence to suggest that this is true. Some writers have explored the concept of fluidity of gender in sex-role research to show that gender fluidity 'recognises no borders or rules of gender'<sup>22</sup> and that individuals either understand or even experience gender as a 'flexible phenomenon' - one not fixed by biological sex.<sup>23</sup> Twenge,<sup>24</sup> for example, conducted a meta-analysis of studies that provided single-sex means on the Bem Sex-Role Inventory,<sup>25</sup> and Personal Attributes Questionnaire.<sup>26</sup> Both instruments are designed to measure quantitative aspects of gender identity. A person who is classified as 'androgynous' will have a range of masculine and feminine traits, as defined by the researcher.

Twenge's meta-analysis indicates that, since the 1970's,<sup>27</sup> women have increasingly identified with 'masculine' traits. There are several possible causes: a significantly changed social climate, women's career aspirations, and increased participation by women in organised sport. This suggests that women experience being either 'male' or female' in terms other than those prescribed by traditional gender roles, although their self-stereotyping may not necessarily reflect that experience.<sup>28</sup>

Women are therefore confronted with conflicting messages. The first is that greater participation by women in traditional male occupations may, for example, encourage the

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<sup>18</sup> See discussion Lorber, 'It's the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' above n 1; Judith Lorber, *Gender and Sexuality* in Ferree, Lorber, Hess, above n 1, 417; Myra Hird, 'Gender's Nature: Intersexuality, Transsexualism and the 'Sex'/Gender' Binary' (2000) 1 *Feminist Theory* 347.

<sup>19</sup> Glenn, above n 2, 5- 6; Pryzgoda and Chrisler, above n 16, 564.

<sup>20</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge, 1990) 6.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Bornstein, above n 16, 52.

<sup>23</sup> Pryzgoda and Chrisler, above n 16, 564.

<sup>24</sup> Jean M Twenge, 'Changes in Masculine and Feminine Traits Over Time: A Meta-Analysis' (1997) 36 *Sex Roles* 305.

<sup>25</sup> Sandra L Bem, 'The Measurement of Psychological Androgyny' (1974) 42 *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 155.

<sup>26</sup> Janet T Spence, Robert Helmreich, and Joy Stapp, 'Ratings of Self and Peers on Sex Role Attributes and Their Relation to Self-Esteem and Conceptions of Masculinity and Femininity' (1975) 32 *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 29. It should be noted that the 'masculine' and 'feminine' traits used in sex role research are the constructions of the researcher and the respondent participants

<sup>27</sup> Twenge, above n 24, 312.

<sup>28</sup> Debra L Oswald and Kara Lindstedt, 'The Content and Function of Gender Self-stereotypes: An Exploratory Investigation' (2006) 54 *Sex Roles* 447, 448.

language of androgyny because roles and expectations are increasingly linked to general characteristics, skills and abilities rather than gender. Equally, however the institutions in women's lives may continue to reflect and expect conformity with traditional ideas about sexuality, physicality, and capability. For instance, the modern paradox of women's identity is reflected in public images of women, particularly in media representations. On the one hand, they are now represented as strong athletes, astute business-women, leaders in their field, but on the other hand, they continue to be objectified as sex toys, or portrayed as subordinate, nurturant, maternal, and as victims, 'Madonnas', and whores.<sup>29</sup>

The gendered habitus is continually confirmed through this kind of gender stereotyping in media representations of women. Certainly, in our time, representations of women's identity continue to be influenced by media portrayals of women as variously weak, subordinate, and sexualized. From childhood, these kinds of representations are found in many media forms, from computer games, television and film, to the print media, and are especially evident in the way women's sporting participation is represented.

Although it is sometimes observed that Bourdieu has neglected the media,<sup>30</sup> despite publishing two works,<sup>31</sup> Couldry has suggested that Bourdieu's framework opens up possibilities for considering how the media might influence the conditions under which dispositions of the habitus are generated.<sup>32</sup> He said:

Bourdieu is open to the contribution of representations, especially those through which 'the group presents itself as such' to itself .... Media, of course, involve both types of structuring: the prior structuring of the spaces in which we live and become subjects, and the representations in which we recognized ourselves as groups.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Beschara Karam, 'Gender and the Media' in Pieter J Fourie, *Media Studies: Media History, Media and Society, Volume 2* (Juta, 2010); Tracy L Dietz, 'An Examination of Violence and Gender Role Portrayals in Video Games: Implications for Gender Socialization and Aggressive Behavior' (1998) 38 *Sex Roles*; Steve Craig, 'Women as Home Care Givers: Gender Portrayal in OTC Drug Commercials' (1992) 22(4) *The Journal of Drug Education* 305.

<sup>30</sup> Eg Garnham, Nicholas, 'Bourdieu, the Cultural Arbitrary and Television' in Craig Calhoun, Edward LiPuma and Moishe Postone (eds) *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives* (University of Chicago Press, 1993) 178; Rodney Benson and Erik Neveu, *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field* (Polity, 2005).

<sup>31</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *On Television and Journalism* (Pluto Press, 1998); Pierre Bourdieu, Luc Boltanski, Robert Castel, Jean Claude Chamboredon, and Dominique Schnapper, *Photography: A Middle Brow Art* (Stanford University Press 1990)

<sup>32</sup> Nick Couldry, 'Liveness, "Reality," and the Mediated Habitus from Television to the Mobile Phone' (2004) 7 *The Communication Review* 353, 358.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid 359.

A number of studies have investigated the role of the media in the formation of gendered habitus among adolescents.<sup>34</sup> The fact that many adolescents have such ready access to media has focused attention on the stereotyped portrayal of men and women in video games, the internet, television, and advertisements. For example, Jochen and Valkenburg found a very strong association between exposure to sexually explicit movies available on the internet and perceptions of women as sex objects.<sup>35</sup>

Several studies have also found that females are generally underrepresented in video games.<sup>36</sup> Even when they are represented, they are portrayed as subordinate,<sup>37</sup> weak,<sup>38</sup> victims,<sup>39</sup> sex objects,<sup>40</sup> sexually provocative,<sup>41</sup> highly sexualised,<sup>42</sup> playing support roles to men,<sup>43</sup> in need of male protection,<sup>44</sup> bystanders to action carried out by men, and rarely in action roles.<sup>45</sup> Despite the allocation of more pivotal and principal roles to some women over the last few years, women are still presented as highly sexualised even when portrayed in strong action roles.<sup>46</sup> These sorts of stereotypical representations of women in video games are also promoted in magazines,<sup>47</sup> television programs, movies, advertisements, and internet gaming sites that provide information about those games.<sup>48</sup>

Bufkin and Eschholz noted the significant role of the media in educating adolescents about sex and violence.<sup>49</sup> They argued that ‘the media serve as an important form of social control

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<sup>34</sup> Peter Jochen and Patti Valkenburg, ‘Adolescents’ Exposure to a Sexualized Media Environment and Their Notions of Women as Sex Objects’ (2007) 56 *Sex Roles* 381; Dietz, above n 29; Melinda C R Burgess, Steven P Stermer and Stephen R Burgess, ‘Sex, Lies, and Video Games: The Portrayal of Male and Female Characters on Video Game Covers’ (2007) 57 *Sex Roles* 419; Jeroen Jansz and Raynel G Martis, ‘The Lara Phenomenon: Powerful Female Characters in Video Games’ (2007) 56 *Sex Roles* 141; Shirley M Ogletree and Cristal N Martinez, Trent R Turner and Brad Mason, ‘Pokémon: Exploring the Role of Gender’ (2004) 50 *Sex Roles* 851; Karen E Dill and Kathryn P Thill, ‘Video Game Characters and the Socialization of Gender Roles: Young People’s Perceptions Mirror Sexist Media Depictions’ (2007) 57 *Sex Roles* 851.

<sup>35</sup> Jochen and Valkenburg, above n 34, 393.

<sup>36</sup> Dill and Thill above n 34, 851; Dietz, above n 29; Burgess, Stermer and Burgess, above n 34.

<sup>37</sup> Dietz, above n 29, 438.

<sup>38</sup> Dietz, above n 29, 438; Shirley M Ogletree and Drake Ryan, ‘College Students’ Video Game Participation and Perceptions: Gender Differences and Implications’ (2007) 56 *Sex Roles* 537.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Dietz, above n 29, 438; Dill and Thill, above n 34, 859.

<sup>41</sup> Burgess, Stermer and Burgess, above n 34, 420; Ogletree and Ryan, above n 38.

<sup>42</sup> Burgess, Stermer and Burgess, above n 34; Ogletree and Ryan, above n 38; Jansz and Martis, above n 34, 142; Dill and Thill, above n 34, 859.

<sup>43</sup> Burgess, Stermer and Burgess, above n 34, 420.

<sup>44</sup> Burgess, Stermer and Burgess, above n 34; Dietz, above n 29, 425.

<sup>45</sup> Burgess, Stermer and Burgess, above n 34.

<sup>46</sup> For example, the Lara Croft character; Jansz and Martis, above n 34.

<sup>47</sup> Monica K Miller and Alicia Summers, ‘Gender Differences in Video Game Characters’ Roles, Appearances, and Attire as Portrayed in Video Game Magazines’ (2007) 57 *Sex Roles* 733.

<sup>48</sup> Dill and Thill, above n 34, 861.

<sup>49</sup> Jana Bufkin and Sarah Eschholz, ‘Images of Sex and Rape: A Content Analysis of Popular Film’ (2000) 6 *Violence Against Women* 1317, 1318.

by informing individuals of the appropriate roles available to them.’<sup>50</sup> Bufkin and Eschholz, as well as Franiuk *et al*<sup>51</sup> also pointed out the continued influence of the media in fostering rape mythology<sup>52</sup> in television, film,<sup>53</sup> and the print media.<sup>54</sup> Grauerholz and King’s content analysis of television programs similarly indicated the prevalence of sexual harassment, or sexually offensive behaviour.<sup>55</sup>

It seems that adolescents are bombarded with images and messages consonant with the representation of women as passive yet highly sexualised individuals. These images of sex, gender, and sexuality also penetrate media coverage of women’s sporting events. Television, in particular, provides audiences of billions with selected, highly packaged auditory and visual information. Blinde *et al* have argued that:

[e]ssentially, television plays a significant role through reproduction of images and messages that legitimate the dominant ideology of a society. As a result, the basic attitudes and meanings that evolve from such mediated images and messages are so widely accepted that they are rarely challenged, questioned, or even analyzed.<sup>56</sup>

Blinde *et al* analysed sixteen televised college basketball games from 1988-90 and noted significant differences in the representation of male and female athletes. This included the persistent use of sexist language to describe female athletes (for example, the women were referred to as ‘girls’ while the men were never referred to as ‘boys’), over-emphasis on women’s non-sporting activities, to expressions of surprise at women’s athleticism.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, assumptions about women’s reduced capacity for strategic thinking and a lower

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 1321.

<sup>51</sup> Bufkin and Eschholz, above n 49; Renae Franiuk, Jennifer L Seefeldt, Sandy L Cepress, and Joseph A Vandello, ‘Prevalence and Effects of Rape Myths in Print Journalism : The Kobe Bryant Case ‘ (2008) 14 *Violence Against Women* 287, 309.

<sup>52</sup> Rape myths are ‘prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs’ that people hold about rape, rape victims, and rapists’ for example, beliefs that only ‘bad girls’ get raped, that women lie or exaggerate the effects of rape, and that many women secretly want to be raped: Martha R Burt, ‘Cultural Myths and Support for Rape’ (1980) 38 *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 217, 217; Diana L Payne, Kimberly A Lonsway and Louise F Fitzgerald (1999) ‘Rape Myth Acceptance: Exploration of Its Structure and Its Measurement Using the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale’ (1999) 33 *Journal of Research in Personality* 27.

<sup>53</sup> Bufkin and Eschholz, above n 49.

<sup>54</sup> Franiuk *et al*, above n 51; See also Alina Korn and Sivan Efrat, ‘The Coverage of Rape in the Israeli Popular Press’ (2004) 10 *Violence Against Women* 1056.

<sup>55</sup> Elizabeth Grauerholz and Amy King, ‘Prime Time Sexual Harassment’ (1997) 3 *Violence Against Women* 129

<sup>56</sup> Elaine M Blinde, Susan L Greenorfer and Rebecca J Shanker, ‘Differential Media Coverage of Men’s and Women’s Intercollegiate Basketball: Reflection of Gender Ideology’ (1991) 15 *Journal of Sport and Social Issue* 98, 99.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.



standard of athleticism reinforced traditional gender assumptions by tacitly relying on men's performance as the gauge of ability.<sup>58</sup>

Jones et al later analysed print media coverage of U.S women's sports teams in basketball, soccer, softball, synchronized swimming, and gymnastics during the Summer Olympics in 1996. They found that '[f]emale athletes are judged and evaluated using traditional beliefs about gender whether they are competing in a traditional gender-appropriate or in a non-traditional gender-inappropriate sport.'<sup>59</sup>

More recently, a multi-nation report investigating the representation of men and women in European sports media found that one third of sports' stories provided some corroboration for traditional gender stereotypes.<sup>60</sup> Further, the authors found that:

there are relatively very few female sports reporters, so that media gate-keeping is loaded with male norms and values. The disproportionate sex ratio of sports reporters in itself creates a tendency to reiterate traditional stereotypes.<sup>61</sup>

Nevertheless, it appears that the way women engage as sports spectators may not do much to challenge the way gendered habitus works to reproduce certain practices in sport. Sargent *et al* found in a 1998 study that women prefer watching more aesthetically pleasing sports such as gymnastics and figure skating, whereas men preferred to watch team ball sports and contact sports.<sup>62</sup> Whiteside and Hardin<sup>63</sup> later also found that female sports consumption tended to be of women's sports emphasising stereotypical female qualities. They suggested that this may be because '[i]mages of professional female athletes playing basketball, football, or soccer do not mesh with participants' domestic reality or socially cultivated aspirations...' <sup>64</sup> They suggested that there are also structural constraints in women's schedules, which influence their sports media consumption and a tendency towards the 'easy-to-watch format'

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid 109-110.

<sup>59</sup> Ray Jones, Audrey J Murrell and Jennifer Jackson, 'Pretty Versus Powerful in the Sports Pages: Print Media Coverage of U.S. Women's Olympic Gold Medal Winning Teams' (1999) 23 *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 183, 189.

<sup>60</sup> Kjartan Ólafsson (ed), Auður Magnús Leiknisdóttir, Birgir Guðmundsson, Gerd von der Lippe, Guðmundur Ævar Oddsson, Margarita Jankauskaitė, Martina Handler, Mirella Pasini, *Sports, Media and Stereotypes Women and Men in Sports and Media* (2006, Centre for Gender Equality –Iceland) 85.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid

<sup>62</sup> Stephanie L Sargent, Dolf Zillman and James B Weaver, 'The Gender Gap in the Enjoyment of Televised Sports' (1998) 22 *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 46.

<sup>63</sup> Erin Whiteside and Marie Hardin, 'Women (Not) Watching Women: Leisure Time, Television, and Implications for Televised Coverage of Women's Sports' (2011) 4(2) *Communication, Culture and Critique* 122.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid 137. See also Vikki Krane, Precilla Y L Choi, Shannon M Baird, Christine M Aimar, and Kerrie J Kauer, 'Living the Paradox: Female Athletes Negotiate Femininity and Muscularity' (2004) 50 (5/6) *Sex Roles* 315

of sports such as figure skating and cheerleading.<sup>65</sup> Women's sports viewing preferences therefore may also affirm gendered ideas about the relative gender appropriateness of certain sports. Girls' and women's inclination for viewing and participating in female appropriate physical activities - whether by choice, lack of opportunity or the disposition to conform with existing gendered habitus – all work to consolidate a strongly gendered habitus, in which ideas about the relative abilities of men and women play a major role.

### **“I can’t”**

The differences in the ways that men and women experience their bodies are reflected in how they each perform physical tasks. Much about this reflects gendered habitus. As I have noted, Bourdieu uses the category of habitus to identify the pattern of embodied dispositions generated in the course of repeated practice in social fields. A gendered habitus results when people become proficient in a range of gendered practices in specific fields.

Women's embodied identities in this sense become habitual by virtue of repetitive embodied experiences which come to be in effect second-nature. Though it seems like a banality or a truism, this means – as Young puts it - that women carry out activities in a gender specific way - as ‘girls’.<sup>66</sup> For example, women tend to prejudge their own abilities to complete physical activities based on their prior embodied experiences and their contemporary self-perceptions of their capacity to engage in new and possibly challenging physical activities.

Young has also pointed out that women have no confidence in their own physical capabilities.<sup>67</sup> For example, they do not trust their embodied ability to engage with objects and events around them.<sup>68</sup> She explained that:

a woman frequently does not trust the capacity of her body to engage itself in relation to things. Consequently, she often lives her body as a burden which must be dragged and prodded along and at the same time protected....women frequently tend to posit a task that would be accomplished relatively easily once attempted as beyond their capacities before they begin it.

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<sup>65</sup> Whiteside and Hardin, above n 63 136

<sup>66</sup> Iris M Young, *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory*, (Indiana University Press, 1990) 146-7.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid 146-7.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid 148.

Typically, the feminine body underuses its real capacity, both as the potentiality of its physical size and strength and as the real skills and coordination that are available to it.<sup>69</sup>

Women's experience of, and with, their bodies is generally less robust than men's experience.<sup>70</sup> Women tend to view their bodies as more fragile than men's bodies and they tend to have greater fears about getting hurt than men.<sup>71</sup> This perception of their body as in need of protection consistently supervenes in women's experience of physicality.<sup>72</sup>

McCaughey, who studied women undertaking self-defence training, found that the main obstacles reported by self-defence instructors about these women was their fear of being hurt, their anxiety about hurting other people, and finally a lack of confidence in their own prowess.<sup>73</sup> Young also argued that women's tentativeness in physically engaging with things is a consequence of 'a fear of getting hurt, which is greater in women than in men. We often experience our bodies as a fragile experience, rather than the media for the enactment of our aims.'<sup>74</sup>

A number of studies<sup>75</sup> have established that in comparison men have more developed spatial and motility skills than women.<sup>76</sup> Motility is a person's individual capacity for independent and spontaneous movement, while a person's spatial ability relates to that person's 'ability to discern the relationship between shapes and objects'.<sup>77</sup> One aspect of this is a person's ability to perceive the relationship between his or her own body and objects in space involved when throwing, kicking, or dribbling balls in various sports. Another aspect is a person's ability to understand his or her own body *as* an object in space, for example, projecting the body into

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid 148.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid 157

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid 148.

<sup>73</sup> Martha McCaughey, *Real Knockouts: The Physical Feminism of Women's Self-Defense* (New York University Press, 1997) 90-91.

<sup>74</sup> Young, above n 66, 146.

<sup>75</sup> Eleanor E Maccoby, and Carol Nagy Jacklin, *The Psychology of Sex Difference* (Stanford University Press, 1974); Katherine A Junaid and Sandra Fellowes, 'Gender Differences in the Attainment of Motor Skills on the Movement Assessment Battery for Children' (2006) 26 *Physical and Occupational Therapy in Pediatrics* 5; Daniel Voyer, Carla Nolan and Susan Voyer, 'The Relation Between Experience and Spatial Performance in Men and Women' (2000) 43 *Sex Roles* 891.

<sup>76</sup> See eg Sean D Hayes, Peter R E Crocker and Kent C Kowalski, 'Gender Differences in Physical Self-Perceptions, Global Self-Esteem, and Physical Activity: Evaluations of the Physical Self-Perception Profile Model' (1999) 22 *Journal of Sport Behavior* 1.

<sup>77</sup> Diane F Halpern, *Sex Differences in Cognitive Abilities* (Routledge, 3rd Ed, 2000) 98.

space to intercept a ball or other object.<sup>78</sup> A lack of highly developed motility and spatial skills may disadvantage women in physical contests and influence perceptions about their own physical competency.

Young argued that women tend to concentrate on the parts of the body that are ‘most immediately connected to the task’ to be performed,<sup>79</sup> rather than on using their whole body to engage with the task.<sup>80</sup> Consequently, when women throw objects, they tend to use their arms and shoulders rather than apply the whole of the body to the task.<sup>81</sup> Women generally also do not run to intercept a ball, but will wait for the ball to reach them: ‘they *react* to its approach’<sup>82</sup> and in this way ‘woman takes herself to be the *object* of the motion rather than its originator.’<sup>83</sup> Women’s motility and spatial abilities appear to influence how they respond when they decide how to act in a context needing some level of physical judgement.

Of course, other writers have explained these kinds of gender differences in spatial ability by pointing to biological factors such as sex hormones,<sup>84</sup> maturation rates,<sup>85</sup> as well as social factors such as gender role identification,<sup>86</sup> and socialization.<sup>87</sup> Evolutionary biologists have claimed that natural selection has meant that men and women developed differential cognitive and motor skills in order to improve their biological fitness or to deal with activities like childcare, hunting, and gathering.<sup>88</sup> Saunders and Walsh for example, have suggested that men have developed greater upper body musculature and strength and they are more adept at throwing and avoiding objects because these attributes are consonant with the skills

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<sup>78</sup> Halpern, above n 77; M Sjölin, ‘Spatial Cognition and Environmental Descriptions in Nils Dahlbäck (ed) *Exploring Navigation: Towards a Framework for Design and Evaluation of Navigation in Electronic Spaces* (Swedish Institute of Computer Science, 1998) at <http://eprints.sics.se/2240/01/SICS-T--98-01--SE.pdf>.

<sup>79</sup> Young, above n 66, 146.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid 145.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid 146.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid 150.

<sup>84</sup> Mark G McGee, ‘Human Spatial Abilities: Psychometric Studies and Environmental, Genetic, Hormonal, and Neurological Influence’ (1979) 86 *Psychological Bulletin* 889.

<sup>85</sup> Barbara Sanders and Mary P Soares, ‘Sexual Maturation and Spatial Ability in College Students’ (1986) 22 *Developmental Psychology* 199.

<sup>86</sup> Margaret L Signorelli and Wesley Jamison, ‘Masculinity, Femininity, Androgyny, and Cognitive Performance: A Meta Analysis’ (1986) 100 *Psychological Bulletin* 207.

<sup>87</sup> Maccoby and Jacklin, above n 75.

<sup>88</sup> L Silverman and M Eals, ‘Sex Differences in Spatial Abilities: Evolutionary Theory and Data’ in Jerome H Barlow, Leda Cosmides and John Tooby (eds) *The Adapted Mind: Evolutionary Psychology and the Generation of Culture* (Oxford University Press, 1992) 533.

required for hunting. Women, on the other hand, have greater and finer dexterity in the wrist and fingers used in gathering tasks.<sup>89</sup>

There is some evidence that sex differences in movement and task performance are found in quite early stages of child development.<sup>90</sup> A natural pre-disposition towards certain tasks may result in boys and girls choosing activities that correspond with their skills,<sup>91</sup> which explains a preference for practice in certain activities. It is possible that boys' greater spatial and motor skills abilities on average may predispose them to choose and practice sports and other activities that require those skills. As a result, natural differences in spatial and motor skills become increasingly differentiated between boys and girls through adolescence.<sup>92</sup> Eventually, through practice, these respective skills will form part of a collection of dispositions that become second nature. Indeed for Bourdieu, 'the apparently most insignificant techniques of the body ... [reveal] the most fundamental principles of construction and evaluation of the social world.'<sup>93</sup>

### **Embodied practices**

'Embodied practices' are central to Bourdieu's conception of social practice. This means that we are repeatedly engaging in particular ways of walking, sitting or moving in space, which are generated in the course of our interactions in particular social fields. This participation in fields is typically gendered. It is not common for women to embody masculine dispositions or practices or to want to engage in particular skill development identified as typically 'masculine'. In consequence, girls may either fail to, or even be denied the opportunity to develop certain physical skills. This can be explained variously in terms of lack of opportunity, the highly complex relationships between motivation and self-perceptions about competencies, or by reference to the different social interaction styles of boys and girls.

Garcia's pre-school study of gender differences in the interaction of young children when learning basic motor skills, for example, shows that the way girls' adopt a co-operative

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<sup>89</sup> Geoff Sanders and Tom Walsh, 'Testing Predictions from the Hunter-Gatherer Hypothesis – Sex Differences in the Motor Control of Hand and Arm' (2007) 5 *Evolutionary Psychology* 653.

<sup>90</sup> Eg Clersida Garcia, 'Gender Differences in Young Children's Interactions When Learning Fundamental Motor Skills' (1994) 65 *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 213, 213.

<sup>91</sup> Voyer et al, above n 75, 892.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid 893.

<sup>93</sup> Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Harvard University Press, 1984) 466.

approach to playing negatively affects girls' participation. Their willingness to help other children with their skills, to wait patiently for boys' excitement or aggression to subside, as well as their less competitive approach to practice all work to achieve this effect.<sup>94</sup> The boys were more forthcoming in demonstrating their abilities than were the girls. Garcia argued that this might indicate that girls (a) were not aware of their abilities, (b) were not confident about their abilities, (c) chose not to stand out from the rest of the group, (d) felt they were not good enough at those skills, or (e) thought that it was not important for them to demonstrate their abilities.<sup>95</sup>

It seems that this style of interaction, with girls tending towards co-operative interaction,<sup>96</sup> and boys' interaction style tending towards being more competitive and aggressive<sup>97</sup> works with boys' more confident physical self-concept to disadvantage girls in these processes.<sup>98</sup> Self-concept is how a person sees or values him or herself. So physical self-concept 'focuses on perceptions of self within the physical activity domain'.<sup>99</sup> It appears that while physical self-concept can decline in early adolescence, the decrease in girls' physical self-concept is typically more significant than boys'.<sup>100</sup>

Children's physical self-concept is also related to their motivation to engage in particular activities.<sup>101</sup> A person's motivation to perform an activity enhances the likelihood of both increased practice and increased competency at particular skills. Equally, possessing self-

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<sup>94</sup> Garcia, above n 85, 223; See also Laura Azzarito, Melinda A Solomon and Louis Harrison Jr, "...If I had a choice, I would..." A Feminist Poststructuralist Perspective on Girls in Physical Education' (2006) 77 *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 222, 223.

<sup>95</sup> Garcia, above n 90, 218.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Juan Antonio Moreno Murcia, Eduardo Cervelló Gimeno, Miguel Hernández, José Antonio Vera Lacárcel and Luis Miguel Ruiz Pérez, 'Physical Self-Concept of Spanish Schoolchildren: Differences by Gender, Sport Practice and Levels of Sport Involvement' (2007) 1 *Journal of Education and Human Development* 1; Garcia above n 90, 213.

<sup>98</sup> Hayes et al, above n 76; Gregory J Welk and Bob Eklund, 'Validation of the Children and Youth Physical Self Perceptions Profile For Young Children' (2005) 6 *Psychology of Sport and Exercise* 51; Anne Torhild Klomsten, Einar M. Skaalvik and Geir Arild Expnes, 'Physical Self-Concept and Sports: Do Gender Differences Still Exist?' (2004) 50 *Sex Roles* 119.

<sup>99</sup> Dorothy L Schmalz and Kristen Krahnstoever Davison, 'Differences in Physical Self-Concept among Pre-Adolescents Who Participate in Gender-Typed and Cross-Gendered Sports (2006) 29 *Journal Of Sports Behavior* 335, 336.

<sup>100</sup> Allan Wigfield and Jacquelynne S Eccles, 'Children's Competence Beliefs, Achievement Values, and General Self-Esteem - Change across Elementary and Middle School' (1994) 14 *Journal of Early Adolescence* 107; Herbert W Marsh, 'Age and Sex Effects in Multiple Dimensions of Self-Concept - Pre-Adolescence to Early Childhood' (1989) 81 *Journal of Educational Psychology* 417; Klomsten, Skaalvik and Expnes, above n 98, 124.

<sup>101</sup> Murcia et al, above n 97, 12.

confidence, which is a core dimension of self-concept,<sup>102</sup> can increase with practice.<sup>103</sup> Consequently, students who perceive themselves as competent in an activity are more likely to be motivated to both practice and engage in that activity,<sup>104</sup> leading to increased perceptions of self-competence and self-concept.

Therefore, if girls have a poor self-concept in relation to a physical activity, they might be less likely to be motivated to take part and therefore less inclined to practice. This will in turn influence the level of skill they have in the activity and consolidate any sense they have that they are not physically competent.

It is interesting to note, however, that – according to one study – girls and boys who participated in sports categorised as ‘cross-gendered’ reported a more positive self-concept than children who participated in gender-typed sports – that is, sports categorised as stereotypically ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’.<sup>105</sup> Schmalz and Davison<sup>106</sup> suggested that this might be explained by the higher self-esteem and self-concept of people who cope well with being possibly stereotyped variously as ‘lesbian’, ‘masculine’ or AS ‘unfeminine’.<sup>107</sup>

Riemer and Visio’s study of children’s perceptions of certain sports as masculine, feminine or neutral indicated that sports associated with risk, danger and violence, strength and endurance<sup>108</sup> – such as football, boxing and wrestling – continue to be seen as ‘male appropriate’. Sports such as aerobics and gymnastics were regarded as ‘female appropriate’ although many other sports including soccer and basketball were increasingly viewed as ‘gender neutral’.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Murcia et al, above n 97, 1; Herbert W Marsh, ‘The Importance of Being Important: Theoretical Models of Relations Between Specific and Global Components of Physical Self-Concept’ (1994) 16 *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* 306; Klomsten, Skaalvik and Expnes, above n 98, 124.

<sup>103</sup> Murcia et al, above n 97, 11-12.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid 12.

<sup>105</sup> Schmalz and Davison, above n 99.

<sup>106</sup> Barbara Satina, Melinda A Solomon, Donetta J Cothran, Susan J Loftus, and Keren Stockin-Davidson, ‘Patriarchal Consciousness: Middle School Students’ and Teachers’ Perspectives of Motivational Practices’ (1998) 3 *Sport, Education, and Society* 181, 185.

<sup>107</sup> Schmalz and Davison, above n 99, 348.

<sup>108</sup> Nathalie Koivula, ‘Perceived Characteristics of Sports Categorized as Gender-Neutral, Feminine and Masculine’ (2001) 24 *Journal of Sport Behavior* 377.

<sup>109</sup> Brenda A Riemer and Michelle E Visio, ‘Gender Typing of Sports: An Investigation of Methany’s Classification’ (2003) 74(2) *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 193, 202; See also Sarah G McCallister, Elaine M Blinde and Jessie M Phillips, ‘Prospects for Change in a New Millennium: Gender Beliefs of Young Girls in Sport and Physical Activity’ (2003) 12 (2) *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal* 83.

In their 2005 study of secondary school children, Klomsten et al<sup>110</sup> have observed some shift in women's participation in sports traditionally considered masculine. However, they found that boys and girls continued to identify sports participation and sport appropriateness by relying on gender stereotypes as well as on a range of masculine and feminine values. Children in the study considered boys to be more aggressive, more pain tolerant and resilient than girls, while girls were believed to be more flexible, graceful, and coordinated.<sup>111</sup> These sorts of perceptions about gender appropriate sports seem to persist into adulthood as Ross and Shinew found that college women were still influenced by traditional concepts of gender appropriate sports, as they identified aggressive sports involving bodily contact as masculine.<sup>112</sup>

However, there is also evidence of a general positive relationship between sports participation and self-esteem,<sup>113</sup> and evidence of a similar relationship for girls who enjoyed playing a sport.<sup>114</sup> Shaffer and Wittes found that this was because girls believed they gained some benefits as a result. These benefits included a favourable body image, their own competence in the particular activity, but also socially desirable masculine attributes such as competitiveness and assertiveness.<sup>115</sup>

Clearly, there are other benefits to participation in sport for girls, such as weight maintenance and fitness. Staffer and Wittes suggested that girls might be encouraged to take part in sports by learning about the benefits to be gained by sports participation.<sup>116</sup> Research by Daniels and Leaper also suggested that acceptance by peers may be important for the self-esteem of girls who participate in sport.<sup>117</sup> On the other hand, if girls do not enjoy sport or physical activity, sports participation could negatively influence their self-esteem.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Anne Torhild Klomsten, Herb W Marsh, and Einar M Skaalvik, 'Adolescents' Perceptions of Masculine and Feminine Values in Sport and Physical Education: A Study of Gender Differences' (2005) 52 *Sex Roles* 625.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid 632.

<sup>112</sup> Sally R Ross and Kimberly J Shinew, 'Perspectives of Women College Athletes on Sport and Gender' (2008) 58 *Sex Roles* 40.

<sup>113</sup> S A Jackson and HW Marsh, 'Athlete or Antisocial - The Female Sport Experience' (1986) 8 *Journal of Sport Psychology* 192; Erin L Richman and David R Shaffer, '“If You Let Me Play Sports”: How Might Sport Participation Influence the Self-Esteem of Adolescent Females' (2000) 24 *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 189.

<sup>114</sup> Richman and Shaffer, above n 113.

<sup>115</sup> David R Shaffer and Erin Wittes, 'Women's Precollege Sports Participation, Enjoyment of Sport, and Self-Esteem' (2006) 55 *Sex Roles* 225, 226, 231.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid 231-2.

<sup>117</sup> Elizabeth Daniels and Campbell Leaper, 'A Longitudinal Investigation of Sport Participation, Peer Acceptance, and Self-Esteem among Adolescent Girls and Boys' (2006) 55 *Sex Roles* 87.

<sup>118</sup> Shaffer and Wittes, above n 115, 230.



As sports participation is a part of many children's schooling, I now want to consider the kinds of experiences girls have in school sports.

### **School sports as 'gendered' fields**

Bourdieu has treated gender as an ancillary organizing principle in constituting specific fields.<sup>119</sup> It is clear that in relation to various sports, some fields are highly gendered - such as most forms of professional football, including soccer, Australian Rules Football, Rugby union and Rugby league and the like. This can be particularly evident in school sporting contexts for a number of reasons. First, school-based physical education is historically based in gendered practice, accentuating masculine and feminine appropriate activities.<sup>120</sup> Further, the choices of activities available to boys and girls have been limited because of gendered assumptions about ability and appropriateness of activity. Thirdly, many contemporary cross-gendered sports were first developed by men and drew on their ideas about what the appropriate rules, equipment, and measures of success should look like, which do not necessarily align with girls' perceptions about sport.<sup>121</sup> Finally, schools may well have limited physical and human resources to deliver two different curricula to suit the physical education needs of boys and girls in schools where many sports are gender typed.

In practice, boys also dominate sporting contexts in schools, which may be explained by girls' reduced engagement in sport, their reduced motivation to participate,<sup>122</sup> and their unwillingness to compete with boys. However, habitus also adapts to the field it encounters.<sup>123</sup> Bourdieu described this relationship between habitus and field as the experience of a 'fish in water': the habitus 'takes the world about itself for granted.'<sup>124</sup> Therefore, these existing conditions feel natural when girls join sporting environments that have been framed around the physical education needs of boys.

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<sup>119</sup> Holly Thorpe, 'Bourdieu, Feminism and Female Physical Culture: Gender Reflexivity and the Habitus-Field Complex', (2009) 26 *Sociology of Sport Journal* 491-516; Lois McNay, 'Gender, Habitus and the Field' (1999) 16 *Theory, Culture and Society* 195, 112; Leslie McCall, 'Does Gender Fit? Bourdieu, Feminism and Conceptions of Social Order' (1992) 21(6) *Theory and Society* 837.

<sup>120</sup> McCallister et al, above n 109, 95.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Satina et al, above n 106, 192, 195.

<sup>123</sup> Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J D Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (University of Chicago Press, 1992) 45.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid 43.

The dispositions of the habitus are both structured and structuring.<sup>125</sup> This is because the habitus is not just the result of our experiences and interactions with others,<sup>126</sup> but also guides and shapes our future practices. These dispositions are internalised in early childhood.<sup>127</sup> Some dispositions have a practical orientation so that children who acquire particular interests and abilities at an early age are more likely to pursue those interests and display those abilities later in life.<sup>128</sup> This means that previous sporting experiences and interactions with parents, family, and friends have an influence on the habitus of girls, and indeed boys, entering fields of physical education. As Swartz observed, '[h]abitus generates perceptions, expectations, and practices that correspond to the structuring properties of earlier socialization.'<sup>129</sup>

According to Bourdieu, these early experiences are significant because the habitus 'tends to ensure its own constancy and its defence against change through the selection it makes with new information by rejecting information capable of calling into question its accumulated information.'<sup>130</sup> For example, girls may decide not to participate in mixed sports such as netball because they feel intimidated by their previous experiences of boys.<sup>131</sup>

Further, when girls do have equal opportunities to enter certain sporting fields, Garrett has pointed out that this is often an opportunity to participate in a 'male' physical education<sup>132</sup> in which they are 'viewed as 'less skilled, less physically able and less interested',<sup>133</sup> than boys. Satina et al saw this 'pretence',<sup>134</sup> of homogeneity in co-educational physical education as a 'form of silencing that contributes to an illusion of gender equity.'<sup>135</sup> As a result, Garrett argued that:

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid 42.

<sup>126</sup> Thorpe, above n 119, 499.

<sup>127</sup> David L Swartz, 'The Sociology of Habit: The Perspective of Pierre Bourdieu' (2002) 22 *The Occupational Therapy Journal of Research* 615.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid 635.

<sup>129</sup> Swartz, above n 127; Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford University Press, 1990) 60-61

<sup>130</sup> Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, above n 129, 60-61.

<sup>131</sup> Garcia, above n 90, 223.

<sup>132</sup> See also Satina et al above n 106, 197.

<sup>133</sup> Robyne Garrett, 'Negotiating a Physical Identity: Girls, Bodies and Physical Education, (2004) 9(2) *Sport, Education and Society* 223, 235; See also Satina et al, above n 106, 192, 195; McCallister et al, above n 109.

<sup>134</sup> Satina et al, above n 106, 185.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid 197.

In this way, the hidden curriculum of physical education works insidiously to construct particular forms of embodied selves and social relations that reproduce rather than challenge a gender dualism and inequitable gender relations.<sup>136</sup>

Satina et al's 1998 study of four schools found students and staff made assumptions about girls' inferiority in the kind of language they used. These assumptions were evident both in the selection process for sports, which favoured boys, as well as in changes to the rules of the game that were intended to make it easier for girls to participate.<sup>137</sup>

Coaches, referees and other persons, with whom girls come into contact in their sport, also foster gendered assumptions about abilities and competencies. Columb-Cabagno et al found that soccer referees penalised on-field aggression by female players more than boys<sup>138</sup> despite boys actually exhibiting twice as many aggressive acts as female players. They suggested this could be attributable to perceptions about gender appropriate attributes and gender characteristics, with referees deeming women less able than men to deal with rough play and acting protectively toward female players.<sup>139</sup>

Satina et al pointed out that by 'valuing and emphasising male characteristics ... the coeducational physical education class in practice becomes dichotomised by gender, with the female students viewed as inherently inferior, or as the 'weaker sex'.<sup>140</sup> As a practical concern, if the message that girls receive is that they are inferior to boys in physical contexts,<sup>141</sup> they may well avoid situations that highlight their weaknesses and refuse to participate.

A number of studies have also suggested that children, adolescents, and young adults<sup>142</sup> persistently perceive sport and physical activity as masculine. This is despite girls' increased participation in sport and despite the growing number of cross-gendered sports such as hockey and soccer. Satina et al suggested that this might be because of perceptions that boys

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<sup>136</sup> Garrett, above n 133, 235.

<sup>137</sup> Satina et al above n 106, 197.

<sup>138</sup> See also Geneviève Coulomb-Cabagno, Olivier Rascle and Nicolas Souchon, 'Players' Gender and Male Referees' Decisions about Aggression in French Soccer: A Preliminary Study' (2005) 52 *Sex Roles* 547.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid 551.

<sup>140</sup> Satina et al, above n 106, 185.

<sup>142</sup> McCallister et al, above n 109 ; Kломsten, Skaalvik and Expnes, above n 98; Azzarito , above n 94; A H Die and V R Holt, 'Perceptions of the "Typical" Female, Male, Female Athlete, and Male Athlete' (1989) 20 *International Journal of Sport Psychology* 135 .

dominate physical education classes,<sup>143</sup> and that their teachers and schools give them preferential treatment.<sup>144</sup>

### **‘Almost as good as a boy’**

A physical education curriculum that is preoccupied with the needs of boys can have the unintended effect of focusing attention on physical inequalities between boys and girls.<sup>145</sup> However, this can also suggest that male physicality is the benchmark for assessing girls’ abilities,<sup>146</sup> or indeed any person’s ability. For example, the description of a girl’s performance of an activity as ‘almost as good as a boy’, ‘as good as a boy’, or even ‘like a boy’ is usually regarded as complimentary. This is because the inference is that the girl must be physically skilled in that activity.<sup>147</sup>

On the other hand, the phrase ‘throwing like a girl’ is usually<sup>148</sup> regarded as deprecating because the inference is that the girl, or boy, is not physically competent at the activity.<sup>149</sup> It has been suggested that this underlying assumption of girls’ incompetence might alienate them from participating in physical activities:

[c]onsistent with a hierarchical or dichotomous view of gender, if she is good, then she must be like a male, since girls are not good. Not only does this perpetuate the vision of male superiority, it also has the potential to further silence and alienate girls from physical activity.<sup>150</sup>

Using boys as a ‘frame of reference’ can also have a negative influence on girls’ physical self-concept, and may result in girls being less motivated to practice, or even participate in the sport in the first place.<sup>151</sup> However, girls who challenge gendered assumptions about

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<sup>143</sup> Satina et al, above n 106.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid 195-196.

<sup>145</sup> McCallister et al, above n 109, 94-95.

<sup>146</sup> Satina et al, above n 106, 196.

<sup>147</sup> McCallister et al, above n 109, 94.

<sup>148</sup> Not all girls will necessarily interpret the phrase as demeaning to girls. See McCallister et al above 109.

<sup>149</sup> McCallister et al, above n 109, 94.

<sup>150</sup> Satina et al, above n 106, 196.

<sup>151</sup> Klomsten, Skaalvik and Expnes, above n 98, 125.

participation in sport and either actively seek out masculine sports or prefer boys' games, may also be perceived as 'tomboys'.<sup>152</sup>

Ironically, tomboys' resistance to stereotype may have the net result of confirming those assumptions in two ways. On the one hand, they will be regarded as deviant for acting outside gendered expectations while those perceptions of deviancy may then reiterate the normalcy of girls' expected behavior.<sup>153</sup> On the other hand, they may be perceived to be 'almost as good' or 'as good as boys', once again tacitly affirming boys' physical abilities as the yardstick for girls' performance.

## Conclusion

So far, I have considered some of the ways in which women experience their physical identity. Bourdieu's conceptions of practice and habitus are useful in illuminating the ways in which these sorts of assumptions about gender are etched in women's bodies. Girls are not taught how to throw like a girl, and for that matter, boys are not taught to throw like a boy. We acquire these dispositions subconsciously and regenerate them in practice so that in a circular<sup>154</sup> process, our actions tend to reproduce the existing conditions of the field.

However, as Kraus pointed out, the habitus is not an "isolated thing" but must be seen in its social context.<sup>155</sup> She went on to say that "[t]hrough the habitus, the gender classification is integrated into individual action forms of social practice, and worldviews. But it is also through the habitus that the gender classification, like every other social institution, is kept alive."<sup>156</sup>

Children form gender identity because of their experiences in early socialisation. These experiences are given 'disproportionate weight' by the habitus,<sup>157</sup> which aligns subsequent aspirations and practices with those earlier experiences.<sup>158</sup> As women, we later identify ourselves as weak and relatively unskilled in physical activities - spectators, rather than

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<sup>152</sup> Satina et al, above n 106, 185.

<sup>153</sup> McCallister et al above n 109.

<sup>154</sup> Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, above n 129.

<sup>155</sup> Beate Kraus, 'Gender, Sociological Theory and Bourdieu's Sociology of Practice', (2006) 23 *Theory Culture Society* 119, 124.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Bourdieu *The Logic of Practice* above n 129, 54.

<sup>158</sup> Swartz, above n 127, 103.

participants. This is based on our previous experiences; we have become reconciled to what we understand as the limited potential of the female body. Schwartz made similar observations in relation to class:

If French working-class youth did not aspire to high levels of education, attainment during the rapid educational expansion of the 1960's...this was because they had internalized and resigned themselves to the limited opportunities that previously existed for their success in school<sup>159</sup>

However although the habitus imposes restrictions, these are neither absolute nor immutable.<sup>160</sup> Bourdieu conceded that although there was a probability that experience will confirm habitus', it is 'not the fate that some people read into it'<sup>161</sup>:

Being the product of history, it is an *open system of dispositions* that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures. It is durable but not eternal!.<sup>162</sup>

In the following chapter, I consider the prospects for changing a gendered habitus in which women interpret themselves as weak and physically vulnerable.

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<sup>159</sup> David Swartz, *Culture and Power: the Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (University of Chicago Press, 1997) 104

<sup>160</sup> Bourdieu and Wacquant, above n 123, 133

<sup>161</sup> Ibid

<sup>162</sup> Ibid

## Chapter 3      THROWING LIKE A GIRL: GENDERED HABITUS AND THE PROBLEM OF CHANGE

Let's be absolutely clear, there is nothing that a man can do in the gym, on the field, in the ring or anywhere else that a woman can't do too. It's a matter of changing the way you perceive exercise and physical challenges

Adam Stanecki 2010.<sup>1</sup>

For Pierre Bourdieu, the way people treat their bodies 'reveals the deepest dispositions of the habitus.'<sup>2</sup> The elements that make up the *habitus* have become embedded in our bodies through repeated experiences over the course of countless social interactions. In part, the very power of *habitus* has to do with the way the embodied feelings, attitudes and practices that define us as gendered creatures are rarely consciously or reflexively available to us. We complacently confront our own feelings, tastes, styles of conduct and ways of living, as if they are all just natural facts.

This way of understanding our identity goes some way to making sense of a world in which all sorts of kinds of gendered conduct are taken for granted. In the previous chapter, I showed how this is true of the ways girls and women play various kinds of sport, or use their bodies in physical ways.

This general point about gendered conduct can be added to in all sorts of ways. Sexual discrimination and sex-based harassment, for example, is still a pervasive part of many women's experience as they continue to encounter a world where they are the object of sexualized comments and discriminatory conduct.<sup>3</sup> In the 1990s, one meta-analysis estimated that as many as 58% of American women experienced some form of sexual harassment, while up to 50% of female employees had experienced sexual harassment

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<sup>1</sup>Adam Stanecki, 'Elite Fitness for Women' *The Blog*, August 6th, 2010  
<http://www.firebrandfitness.com.au/elite-fitness-for-women/#more-76>.

<sup>2</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction - A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Harvard University Press, 1984) 190.

<sup>3</sup> Margaret De Judicibus and Marita P McCabe, 'Blaming the Target of Sexual Harassment: Impact of Gender Role, Sexist Attitudes, and Work Role' (2001) 44 *Sex Roles* 401.

at work.<sup>4</sup> In Australia in 2009-2010, 21% of all complaints to the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission related to sex discrimination, and 88% of those complaints concerned sex discrimination in the workplace.<sup>5</sup> While men are occasionally subjected to sexual harassment, most of the victims are women. A survey revealed that in 2008, 32% of women had experienced sexual harassment compared to 8% of men and of that number, 22% of women and 5% of men had experienced sexual harassment in the workplace.<sup>6</sup>

Women's pervasive experience of sexual harassment perhaps explains why, as Walklate has argued, 'fear, risk and danger' are highly gendered phenomena.<sup>7</sup> Women begin learning about their sexual vulnerability in adolescence<sup>8</sup> when they are warned about the need for precautionary behaviours in the face of potential dangers.<sup>9</sup> As Walklate goes on to note:

...[t]his does not mean that all women are always afraid, or that women are always or only afraid of men that they know. The point is that, for women, threats of sexual danger permeate their public as well as their private lives.<sup>10</sup>

The idea that so much ordinary everyday activity and social interaction is both habitual, and experienced as the natural and only way of doing things, may imply that deeply conventional aspects of our gendered identity and *habitus* might be very resistant to change. A moment's reflection would suggest, for example, that asking people whose identity includes being a Muslim or a Catholic, or being gay or lesbian, to give up that aspect of their identity would reveal the profound difficulty involved in such a project of transformation. There may be similar difficulties involving the transformation of a basic aspect of someone's identity as a woman: that is, the conviction that she is physically weak, vulnerable, and inept.

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<sup>4</sup> Debra A Charney and Ruth C Russell, 'An Overview of Sexual Harassment' (1994) 151 *American Journal of Psychiatry* 10; See also Remus Ilies, Nancy Hauserman, Susan Schwochau and John Stibal, 'Reported Incidence Rates of Work-Related Sexual Harassment in the United States -Using Meta-Analysis to Explain Reported Rate Disparities' (2003) 56 *Personnel Psychology* 607.

<sup>5</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission, <http://www.hreoc.gov.au/sexualharassment/index.html#sh3>;

<sup>6</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission, *Sexual Harassment : Serious Business - Results of the 2008 Sexual Harassment National Telephone Survey* (2008) 12-13.

<sup>7</sup> Sandra Walklate, 'Risk and Criminal Victimization: A Modernist Dilemma' (1997) 37 *British Journal of Criminology* 35, 44.

<sup>8</sup> Martha R Burt and Rhoda E Estep, 'Apprehension and Fear: Learning a Sense of Sexual Vulnerability' (1981) 7 *Sex Roles* 511 .

<sup>9</sup> Burt and Estep, above n 8, 520; Luciana C Silva and David W Wright, 'Safety Rituals- How Women Cope with the Fear of Sexual Violence (2009) 14(4) *The Qualitative Report* 747.

<sup>10</sup> Walklate, above n 7, 42.



In this Chapter, I begin to address some of the practical implications of my research work. In particular, I want to focus on the idea that women's embodied identity or *habitus* includes attributes or traits like vulnerability, passivity, weakness, and physical ineptitude and establish what might be thought or done about changing this gendered identity.

I have argued that Bourdieu's theory of practice highlights many of the crucial aspects of women's experience of themselves. However, while Bourdieu's theoretical framework seems to make a lot of sense when applied to the way women both understand themselves and conduct themselves in highly gendered and habitual ways, it is less clear at first how the framework accounts either for the possibility of change, or whether it is conducive to thinking about how best to promote change. Critics have often alleged that there is something of a bias built into Bourdieu's theoretical framing of practice-as-*habitus*, especially when enacted in specific 'fields'.<sup>11</sup> Writers like Janet Chan for example, have concluded that 'Bourdieu's framework has generally emphasised social reproduction rather than social change'.<sup>12</sup> This interpretation, while it may be mistaken, points nonetheless to the need to address some important questions.

What are the prospects for changing a gendered *habitus* in which women experience themselves as vulnerable, fragile, physically incompetent, or weak? What aspects of women's *habitus* are conducive to a self-portrait of women as weak, passive, vulnerable, and physically incompetent? What kinds of strategies have been adopted to date to enable women to overcome the *habitus* of submission and vulnerability? How successful have these interventions been? I begin by considering what aspects of *habitus* encourage women to portray themselves in this way. This is followed by an outline of the kinds of strategies and practices that might enable *habitus* to change. I conclude with a discussion of the possibilities of refashioning gendered *habitus* through involvement in various kinds of physical practice in self defence training.

I begin by outlining the problem—which the very conception of *habitus* seems to set up—before turning to the work of Bandura on self-efficacy. I then assess the research, which has examined the value and effectiveness of women's self-defence training as a

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<sup>11</sup> Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>12</sup> Janet B L Chan, 'Using Pierre Bourdieu's Framework for Understanding Police Culture,' (2004) 56-7 *Droit et Soci  t  * 346.

way to increase self-efficacy, and undo some parts of the gendered *habitus* that has reproduced women's experience of vulnerability.

### ***Habitus, reflexivity, and change***

As we have seen, Bourdieu's theory of practice attempted to transcend the antagonistic relationship between 'structure' and 'agency'.<sup>13</sup> Bourdieu established the relationship of 'action to culture, structure, and power'<sup>14</sup> by relating the 'objective' and 'subjective' dimensions of human practice through the concept of the *habitus*.<sup>15</sup> What Bourdieu has called the 'logic of practice' involves an ongoing interaction between 'agent/action' and 'structure' from which the *habitus* emerges. *Habitus* 'stores social forces into the human organism'<sup>16</sup> but also reflects the resources and the structural position available to each person.<sup>17</sup> Bourdieu put it this way:

This infinite yet strictly limited generative capacity is difficult to understand only so long as one remains locked in the usual antinomies - which the concept of the *habitus* aims to transcend - of determinism and freedom, conditioning and creativity, consciousness and the unconscious, or the individual and society. Because the *habitus* is an infinite capacity for generating products - thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions - whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production, the conditioned and conditional freedom it provides is as remote from creation of unpredictable novelty as it is from simple mechanical reproduction of the original conditioning. synthesises objectivist and subjectivist stances.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> David Swartz, *Culture and Power: the Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (University of Chicago Press, 1997) 65, 96.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid 9.

<sup>15</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford University Press, 1990) 55, 56; Swartz, above n 13, 96.

<sup>16</sup> Loïc Wacquant, 'Pierre Bourdieu' in Rob Stones (ed), *Key Contemporary Thinkers* (Macmillan, 2008) 261, 268

<sup>17</sup> R K Harker, C Mahar and C Wilkes (eds), *An Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu- The Practice of Theory* (MacMillan, 1990).

<sup>18</sup> Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, above n 15, 55.

*Habitus*, therefore, is the way that ‘society becomes deposited’<sup>19</sup> in individuals in the form of ‘dispositions, schemas, forms of know-how and competence,’<sup>20</sup> all of which function below the threshold of consciousness.<sup>21</sup> The idea that these dispositions and propensities are unconscious is crucial to the concept of ‘practice as *habitus*’, but this idea also places significant constraints on the prospect of change: can we change aspects of ourselves of which we are not even aware?

Identity, however, is an imprecise concept.<sup>22</sup> An early understanding of identity held that identity is determined by social location,<sup>23</sup> which suggested that identity is durable and stable.<sup>24</sup> For example, as Wagner put it:

You were German and a white-collar employee, or English and a worker, but whatever you were it was not by your own choice. Ambivalences had been eliminated by comprehensive classificatory orders and the enforcing of these orders in practice.<sup>25</sup>

The power of people to change or refashion their identities has been highlighted in more recent discussions and theories addressing the nature of modernity. One perspective exemplified in the work of Giddens suggests that we are increasingly able to self-consciously, and reflexively, create our own identities. Giddens argued that structures such as ‘class, occupation, gender and family are slowly declining in their ability to define our life experiences’,<sup>26</sup> which opens up possibilities for us to have some control over the fashioning of our own identities.<sup>27</sup> However, another perspective centring on Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*, which I discuss further in, argues that, while there is scope for some reflexivity within this apparatus, there are limited possibilities for people to construct their own identities.

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<sup>19</sup> Zander Navarro, ‘In Search of Cultural Interpretation of Power - The Contribution of Pierre Bourdieu’ in Stephen Devereux and Caroline Knowles (eds), *Challenging Orthodoxies, Influencing Debates- Volume 37, Issue 4*, (Institute of Development Studies, 2006) 16.

<sup>20</sup> Nick Crossley, *The Social Body - Habit, Identity and Desire* (Sage, 2001) 93.

<sup>21</sup> Nick Crossley, ‘The Phenomenological Habitus and its Construction’ (2001) 30 *Theory and Society* 81, 83

<sup>22</sup> Wendy Bottero, ‘Intersubjectivity and Bourdieusian approaches to Identity’ (2010) 4 *Cultural Sociology* 3, 3

<sup>23</sup> Wendy Bottero, ‘Bourdieu, Identity and Reflexivity’ (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Montreal Convention Center, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, Aug 10, 2006) [http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p97111\\_index.html](http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p97111_index.html).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid 2

<sup>25</sup> Peter Wagner, *A Sociology of Modernity: Liberty and Discipline* (Routledge, 1994) 159.

<sup>26</sup> Paul T Kennedy, ‘Introduction: Globalization and the Crisis of Identities?’ in Paul T Kennedy and Catherine Danks (eds), *Globalization and National Identities: Crisis or Opportunity?* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2001) 1, 6.

<sup>27</sup> Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity- Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford University Press, 1991); Paul Heelas, ‘Detraditionalization and its Rivals’, in Paul Heelas, Scott Lash and Paul Morris, *Detraditionalization* (Blackwell Publishers, 1996) 1, 5.

Some theorists have asked whether Bourdieu's conceptual apparatus adequately addresses the issue of reflexivity at all. They raise this question because it is argued that reflexivity plays a much more important role in modern life, and that this is at odds with any assumption about a stable and durable identity grounded in social location.<sup>28</sup>

Swartz, however, has provided some guide as to when opportunities for reflexivity occur in a Bourdieuian framework. He said there are three different kinds of situations arising from the dialectic of *habitus* and field in Bourdieu's framework.<sup>29</sup> The first is that *habitus* will adapt practices, which correspond to the field conditions encountered by agents when they 'first internalized their habitus'.<sup>30</sup> Secondly, *habitus* will also adapt practices in response to shifts in the 'opportunities and constraints' of the field, although there will be some disjuncture<sup>31</sup> between field and *habitus*, such as the difficulties of adjustment that some women experience on re-entering the work force after a period of time spent child rearing.<sup>32</sup> Finally, Swartz argued there is an opportunity for reflexivity when *habitus* moves across fields, or there is a disjunction between fields and *habitus*, which may lead, from time to time, to opportunities for transformation.<sup>33</sup> Change occurs when people use traditional strategies to deal with new phenomena,<sup>34</sup> because the *habitus* is obliged to 'generate 'nonadaptive forms of behaviour',<sup>35</sup> when there is a substantial gap between structural opportunities and expectations of the habitus. Bourdieu described this discordance as *hysteresis*.<sup>36</sup>

However, while there are some limited opportunities for reflexivity, Sweetman pointed out that Bourdieu's habitus limits reflexive *intervention* in two ways.<sup>37</sup> The first relates to the pre-conscious aspects of habitus that are not amenable to transformation, and the second relates to the 'relative irreversibility [of ]this process',<sup>38</sup> that is, the idea that we

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<sup>28</sup> Bottero, 'Bourdieu, Identity and Reflexivity' above n 23.

<sup>29</sup> Swartz, above n 13, 213.

<sup>30</sup> Bottero, 'Bourdieu, Identity and Reflexivity' above n 23..

<sup>31</sup> Swartz, above n 13, 213.

<sup>32</sup> Lois McNay, 'Gender, Habitus and the Field' (1999) 16 *Theory, Culture and Society* 195,110.

<sup>33</sup> Holly Thorpe, 'Bourdieu, Feminism and Female Physical Culture: Gender Reflexivity and the Habitus-Field Complex, (2009) 26 *Sociology of Sport Journal* 491, 506.

<sup>34</sup> Swartz, above n 13, 213.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, above n 15, 59.

<sup>37</sup> Paul Sweetman, 'Twenty-First Century Dis-ease? Habitual Reflexivity or the Reflexive Habitus' (2003) 51 (4) *The Sociological Review* 528, 535

<sup>38</sup> Bourdieu and Wacquant, above n 11, 133

have unalterable pasts. These ideas have also prompted arguments that his work is excessively deterministic.<sup>39</sup>

It is never very clear how change is conceptualised in Bourdieu's account. He accepted that people can and do change the way they walk, dress and otherwise deport themselves. For example, he referred to the re-education of 'charm school girls':

In the specialised 'charm schools' which train hostesses, the working-class girls who select themselves on the basis of 'natural' beauty undergo a radical transformation in their way of walking, sitting, laughing, smiling, talking, dressing, making-up etc.)<sup>40</sup>

He also emphasised the generative quality of habitus and stressed that 'like every art of inventing,'<sup>41</sup> the *habitus* can produce an 'infinite number of practices'<sup>42</sup> even though they are limited in their diversity 'by the historically and socially situated conditions' of the production of the habitus'.<sup>43</sup> However, he also insisted that opportunities for transformation only occur in times of crisis 'in which the routine, adjustment of subjective and objective structures is *brutally disrupted*'<sup>44</sup> and 'rational choice' takes over.<sup>45</sup>

Other identity theorists have used Bourdieu's conceptualisation of the 'pre-reflexive, doxic, embodied nature of habitus'<sup>46</sup> to point out the limits to agency. For Lois McNay, Bourdieu's work countered theories of reflexive transformation that tended to overestimate the extent to which we can shape our identities or exercise agency.<sup>47</sup> She believed there was an over emphasis on self-reflective transformation and that there were aspects of embodied experience, which were pre-reflexive and therefore not easily changed.<sup>48</sup> In particular, aspects of gender identity, such as sexual desire, or maternal

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<sup>39</sup> Jeffrey C Alexander, *Fin de Siècle Social Theory: Relativism, Reduction and the Problem of Reason* (Verso, 1995) 140; Richard Jenkins, *Pierre Bourdieu* (Routledge, revised ed, 2002) 97; Richard Jenkins, 'Pierre Bourdieu and the Reproduction of Determinism' (1982) 16(2) *Sociology* 270–281; Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (Routledge, 1997).

<sup>40</sup> Bourdieu, *Distinction*, above n 2, 206.

<sup>41</sup> Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, above n 15, 55.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Bourdieu and Wacquant, above n 11, 131. Emphasis added.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Bottero, 'Bourdieu, Identity and Reflexivity', above n 23, 3

<sup>47</sup> McNay, 'Gender, Habitus and the Field', above n 32, 113.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid 102.

feelings, are enacted at a preconscious level.<sup>49</sup> She pointed out that ‘men and women have deep-seated, often unconscious investments in conventional images of masculinity and femininity which cannot easily be reshaped.’<sup>50</sup> For example, she noted Bourdieu’s argument that:

...femininity is imposed for the most part through an unremitting discipline that concerns every part of the body and is continuously recalled through the constraints of clothing or hairstyle. The antagonistic principles of male and female identity are thus laid down in the form of permanent stances, gaits and postures which are the realization, or rather, the naturalization of an ethic.<sup>51</sup>

Chambers also reasoned that women’s ‘compliance’ is pre-reflexive: ‘it does not need to be consciously accepted and affirmed because it is always and already the organizing idea of consciousness’.<sup>52</sup> However, McNay was concerned that some theories of reflexive transformation emphasise consciousness and, implicit in that, the idea that we can self-regulate.<sup>53</sup> She believed that this way of thinking overlooked the ‘more enduring, reactive aspects of identity.’<sup>54</sup>

McNay attributed this way of thinking in part, to a tendency to understand gender identity as a form of symbolic identification rather than as a deeply entrenched form of embodied existence.<sup>55</sup> She pointed out that there are aspects of identity that are not easily amenable to re-fashioning or transformation and suggested that Giddens, for example, failed to consider the corporeal basis of sexual identity.<sup>56</sup> She pointed out:

Without having to resort to biologicistic notions of maternal instinct, the inscription of the mothering role upon the female body is fundamental in the inculcation of emotional and physical predispositions that maintain gender inequality around child rearing. It is not clear how such forms of identity, which are over determined both physically and emotionally can be that easily dislodged.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid 103.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination* (Stanford University Press, 2001), 27.

<sup>52</sup> Chambers above n 45, 330, 331.

<sup>53</sup> Lois McNay, *Gender and Agency: Reconfiguring the Subject in Feminist and Social Theory* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2000) 42.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> McNay, ‘Gender, Habitus and the Field’, above n 32, 113.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid 98.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

Accordingly, McNay turned to Bourdieu's work on *habitus* and the 'field' to adjust what she regarded as an overemphasis on self-fashioning in other theories of identity. Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* recognised that there are unconscious and pre-reflexive elements in identity.<sup>58</sup> As she explained:

Habitus suggests a layer of embodied experience that is not immediately amendable to self-fashioning. On a pre-reflexive level, the actor is predisposed or oriented to behave in a certain way because of the 'active presence' of the whole past embedded in the durable structures of the *habitus*.<sup>59</sup>

But McNay also maintained that although *habitus* highlights the embedded nature of gender identity, Bourdieu underestimated the 'ambiguities and dissonances' in the ways that men and women occupy masculine and feminine positions.<sup>60</sup> Gender norms are not necessarily fixed or enduring.<sup>61</sup> She pointed out that changes in the *habitus* are possible as women move into increasingly different fields.<sup>62</sup> While there are difficulties in the feminine *habitus* moving into different fields of action, McNay proposed that as women increasingly participate in non-traditional fields, this may mean that 'the lack of fit between gendered *habitus* and field may be intensified.'<sup>63</sup> We might consider, for example, the lack of fit between a feminine *habitus* and active combat duty which opens up the possibility for critical reflexivity and social transformation.<sup>64</sup> Chambers has also suggested that changes could be encouraged in the *habitus* by encouraging interactions between fields to highlight other options.<sup>65</sup>

Bottero and Adkins have pointed also to the reflexivity, which is 'bound into habitual action.'<sup>66</sup> As Adkins explained, gender is routinely unconsciously incorporated into conceptions of self-identity and these reflexive practices in relation to gender are so habituated that they are incorporated into the 'norms, rules and expectations that govern gender in late modernity'.<sup>67</sup> In the end, however, opportunities for reflexive intervention do not automatically result in identity transformation as people may neither

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid 102.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid 107.

<sup>61</sup> Julie McLeod, 'Feminists Re-reading Bourdieu – Old Debates and New Questions About Gender Habitus and Gender Change (2005) 3(1) *Theory and Research in Education* 11, 21.

<sup>62</sup> McNay, 'Gender, Habitus and the Field' above n 32, 107.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid 107.

<sup>64</sup> Lisa Adkins, 'Reflexivity- Freedom or Habit of Gender?' (2004) 52(2) *Sociological Review* 191.

<sup>65</sup> Chambers above n 45, 340.

<sup>66</sup> Bottero, 'Intersubjectivity and Bourdieusian Approaches to Identity', above n 22, 11.

<sup>67</sup> Adkins, 'Reflexivity: Freedom or Habit of Gender?' above n 64, 204.

have the opportunity, nor the ability, to refashion themselves.<sup>68</sup> The ability to be reflexive also means that we may realise that change is not possible.<sup>69</sup>

However, this does not mean that change cannot occur. Bourdieu told us that *habitus* is generative of practice, so creative change can occur as the ever-shifting conditions of the field enable different interactions. Part of the problem with grasping this approach to *habitus* has been well expressed by Shusterman, who notes one reaction of critics to the concept of habitus:

Much of the resistance to the idea of habitus derives from the assumption that it must function somehow as an underlying causal mechanism. Since we tend to assume that behavioral explanations must be understood either in terms of conscious rules or brute causality, and since habitus is clearly not the former, one implicitly (but falsely) assumes that it must somehow involve some hidden causal mechanism that Bourdieu's analysis fails to display.<sup>70</sup>

### **The problem of changing *habitus***

This brings me to the second concern about the relevance and applicability of Bourdieu's conceptual 'arsenal'<sup>71</sup> to the problem of change. It has been suggested by many commentators that Bourdieu has not given any attention to how change happens, or to what might be done to promote this kind of change. This point is made, for example, in Chan's well-known study of policing and police culture,<sup>72</sup> which drew on Bourdieu's work. Chan's work set out to show that change was possible in the 'field' of policing. She was particularly interested in the possibilities for change in the ways that NSW police interacted with ethnic communities including indigenous Australians.<sup>73</sup> Chan's work highlights the way Bourdieu's framework typically lends itself to a preoccupation with cultural change, which focuses on organisational-structural change rather than attending to changing *habitus* itself.

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<sup>68</sup> Thorpe, above n 33, 504.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid 506.

<sup>70</sup> Richard Shusterman (ed) *Bourdieu - A Critical Reader* (Blackwell, 1999) 4.

<sup>71</sup> Wacquant, 'Pierre Bourdieu' above n 16, 5.

<sup>72</sup> Janet B L Chan, *Changing Police Culture: Policing in a Multicultural Society* (Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.



Drawing on Bourdieu, Chan argued that the cultural practice of police develops through the relationship of the field and *habitus*. She defined the field of policing as a 'social space of conflict and competition, where participants struggle to establish control over specific power and authority, and, in the course of the struggle, modify the structure of the field itself.'<sup>74</sup>

Chan said that this definition of the field emphasises the 'historical, structural relations between positions of power'.<sup>75</sup> Different elements of the field are influential in shaping police culture, particularly with respect to police relations with minority communities. These include the political context of policing, the social and economic status of minorities, and government policies in relation to these groups, such as land rights, as well as police discretionary powers and associated complaint processes and other protections against abuse.<sup>76</sup> Police struggle or compete for power or '(capital), which includes physical capital such as 'strength, physique, and tolerance of harsh conditions',<sup>77</sup> and symbolic capital such as reputation.<sup>78</sup>

Chan argued that police 'negotiate[d]' the policing field through their *habitus*,<sup>79</sup> and developed a 'feel for the game' of policing.<sup>80</sup> This feel for the game was formed through acquiring different forms of cultural knowledge, such as developing routine ways to categorise people and their environment<sup>81</sup>; or information about police values, such as the 'police 'code of silence' in relation to fellow officers.<sup>82</sup>

Police also acquire particular bodily dispositions,<sup>83</sup> such as ways of walking and talking. Chan explained that:

*habitus* 'allows for creation and innovation within the field of police work. It is a 'feel for the game': it enables an infinite number of 'moves' to be made in an infinite number of

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid 71.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid 80.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid 80.

<sup>77</sup> Janet B L Chan, Chris Devery and Sally Doran, *Fair Cop - Learning the Art of Policing* (University of Toronto Press, 2003) 37.

<sup>78</sup> Chan, 'Using Pierre Bourdieu's Framework', above n 12, 346; Chan, *Changing Police Culture*, above n 72.

<sup>79</sup> Chan, 'Using Pierre Bourdieu's Framework' above n 12, 340.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid 342.

<sup>81</sup> Chan, *Changing Police Culture*, above n 72, 77.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid 79.

<sup>83</sup> Chan, 'Using Pierre Bourdieu's Framework', above n 12, 337.

situations. It embodied what police officers often refer to as commonsense' and what are commonly known as 'policing skills.'<sup>84</sup>

Chan argued that changes in police culture involve changes at the field level: 'that is, the social, economic, legal and political sites in which policing takes place.'<sup>85</sup> This affects practice because habitus responds to the field. While changes to habitus might also result in changes in practice, Chan argued that *habitus* might revert unless the field also changed in such a way that the changes to habitus were reinforced.<sup>86</sup>

The point of this is to suggest that the kind of analysis offered by Bourdieu can tend to focus on the more 'structural' or organizational aspects of change and overlook the possibility of directly addressing exercises in changing *habitus*. Equally, as Horvat and Davis observed recently, it is not all that surprising that there are very few studies which illustrate how *habitus* can be changed.<sup>87</sup>

However, some researchers working on social movements and in educational settings have done research which illuminates how change may occur. Writers researching various environmental movements, for example, have recognised the challenges in changing the *habitus* of conspicuous consumption.<sup>88</sup> Writers like Haluza-Delay have drawn on Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* as a very useful way of explaining why 'environmental social change has been so difficult: in an environmentally unsound society transformation of the habitus in more ecologically appropriate ways will always be very difficult.'<sup>89</sup> Others like Smith have argued that the goal of radical ecology ought to be a change process, which encourages the development of an ecological 'attunement'<sup>90</sup> or, using Bourdieu's expression, getting a 'feel for the game' - 'of what is significant and fitting and when and where it is so.'<sup>91</sup> This results in what Smith described as the ecological *habitus*.

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<sup>84</sup> Chan, *Changing Police Culture*, above n 72, 71.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid 92.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Erin McNamara Horvat and James Earl Davis, 'Schools as sites for Transformation: Exploring the Contribution of Habitus' (2010) 20 *Youth and Society* 12.

<sup>88</sup> Debbie V S Kasper, 'Ecological Habitus - Toward a Better Understanding of Socioecological Relations' (2009) 22 *Organization Environment* 311, 320.

<sup>89</sup> Randolph Haluza-Delay, 'The Practice of Environmentalism - Creating Ecological Habitus' in *Developing a Compassionate Sense of Place: Environmental and Social Conscientization in Environmental Organizations* (Paper presented at the American Sociological Association, Montreal, QB. August 12, 2006).

<sup>90</sup> Mick Smith, *An Ethic of Place: Radical Ecology, Postmodernity, and Social Theory* (Sunny Press, 2001) 198.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid 199.

Yet what does this imply for the kinds of interventions that might begin to address the gendered *habitus*?

### **The possibilities for transformation**

Here I will begin by focusing on one aspect of women's *habitus*: namely, the sense women have of their capacity to use their bodies to deal with potential or actual threats to their safety and well being. In my thesis, I am interested in whether women can change these kinds of aspects of *habitus* through deliberate pedagogic experiences such as self-defence training. But the idea that people can change deeply embedded, pre-conscious behaviours, through consciousness raising and self-reflective awareness is potentially problematic within Bourdieu's framework.

While *habitus* changes constantly as it encodes new experiences, Bourdieu's account of *habitus* suggests that it cannot be 'touched by voluntary, deliberate transformation'.<sup>92</sup> Bourdieu and Passeron have also told us that learning is an 'irreversible process',<sup>93</sup> which suggests that acquiring dispositions of the *habitus* cannot be undone. For Bourdieu, the *habitus* limits any possibilities for reflection and thinking because *habitus* always precedes reflection. In other words, individual choice and individual action are always framed or informed by the *habitus*.<sup>94</sup> This is 'a crucial proviso.'<sup>95</sup>

However, that is not to say that Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* precludes consciousness raising and self-reflective change at all. There is some limited potential for transformation in 'times of crisis' as I have referred to above, in the transposable nature of *habitus*<sup>96</sup> as it crosses fields or indeed crosses within fields, as with Mennesson's boxers<sup>97</sup> or Thorpe's snowboarders.<sup>98</sup> Wacquant has also explained how the *habitus* can

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<sup>92</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge University Press, 1977) 94.

<sup>93</sup> Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (Sage, 1990) 43.

<sup>94</sup> Simon Mackenzie, 'Situationally Edited Empathy: An Effect of Socio-Economic Structure on Individual Choice' (2006) 14(4) *Critical Criminology* 365, at <http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/5156/1/5156.pdf>, 17.

<sup>95</sup> Loïc Wacquant, 'Towards a Reflexive Sociology: a Workshop with Pierre Bourdieu' (1989) 7(1) *Sociological Theory* 26, 45.

<sup>96</sup> Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* above n 92, 95.

<sup>97</sup> Christine Mennesson, "'Hard" Women and "Soft" Women - The Social Construction of Identities among Female Boxers' (2000) 35 *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 21.

<sup>98</sup> Thorpe, above n 33.

be transformed through an awakening of consciousness and a form of ‘self-work that enables the individual to get a handle on his or her dispositions.’<sup>99</sup> He emphasised that the ‘possibility and efficacy of this kind of self-analysis is itself determined in part by the original structures of the *habitus* in question, in part by the objective conditions under which the awakening of self-consciousness takes place.’<sup>100</sup> He referred to Bourdieu’s description of the ‘anti institutional position’<sup>101</sup> of French philosophers following the transformation of French Universities after the May 1968 student movement as an example.<sup>102</sup>

However, even if consciousness raising and self-awareness are included within Bourdieu’s framework, consciousness-raising through strategic pedagogic practices do not necessarily overcome the durability of *habitus* nor the problem of individual resistance to change. For example, a student of the Alexander Technique<sup>103</sup> might engage in all the training required to re-educate his or her posture, stance, and so forth yet continue to slouch while seated at a desk or shuffle when walking. The balance lies, as Wacquant indicates above, in the *habitus* itself.

Bourdieu stressed the generative aspect of *habitus*. *Habitus* structures new experiences, but it does so in terms of its own, ongoing, self-generating history. The result is that while the *habitus* of many people in a particular field will be similar, for example the field of lawyers or the field of professional basketball players, each individual *habitus* will be different.

The conditions in which practice takes place will also be different. For example, the child who willingly attends piano lessons and the child who goes to lessons kicking and screaming, will have different learning experiences. Some people go to the gym to structure a new body; others go for the lifestyle. As an example, at the time of writing, my greatest aspiration is to perform a handstand. I want to forget every failed, half-hearted attempt, throw my legs into space and trust my arms not to fail me, but I cannot let go of being scared. I know what I need to do but history keeps me standing.

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<sup>99</sup> Wacquant, ‘Towards a Reflexive Sociology’ above n 95, 133.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid 64.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid 64, 133.

<sup>103</sup> Jen Tarr, ‘Habit and Conscious Control: Ethnography and Embodiment in the Alexander Technique’ (2008) 9 *Ethnography* 477.

The point I make is that change in *habitus* may be possible in either a ‘crisis’ model of change or the reflexivity that is possible within *habitus*, but people may not necessarily use those opportunities. Even when their self-consciousness has been awakened, such as the French philosophers referred to by Bourdieu and Wacquant, people may be unable to change because of their own ‘durably installed’<sup>104</sup> embodied histories – or they may simply choose not to. As Chambers pointed out,

knowing that we wear makeup because there are significant pressures on us to do so, and regretting that fact as it renders us objectified, is not enough to stop us from deriving at least some pleasure from selecting and applying it.<sup>105</sup>

### **The ‘conditionings of training and exercise’**

It is clear, however, that particularly in his later work Bourdieu considered the possibility of deliberately ‘reconditioning’ or transforming the *habitus* through a conscious awareness of the ‘conditionings undergone’<sup>106</sup>, and a strategic pedagogic practice intended to override those habituations. In a passage he titled ‘Habitus and freedom’, Bourdieu put it this way:

the habitus offers the only durable form of freedom, that given by the mastery of an art, whatever the art. And that this freedom made nature, which is acquired, paradoxically, by the obligated or elective submission to the conditionings of training and exercise ... is indeed, as is the freedom in regard to language and body that is called ease, a property ... or, if you wish, an acquisition and inheritance predisposed by their unequal distribution to function as capital. This then raises the question of whether there can be any liberty other than that to master one’s inheritance and acquisitions. Pedagogical action can thus, because of and despite the symbolic violence it entails, open the possibility of an emancipation founded on awareness and knowledge of the conditionings undergone and on the imposition of new conditionings designed durably to counter their effects.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, above n 15, 57.

<sup>105</sup> Clare Chambers, *Sex, Culture, and Justice- the Limits of Choice* (Penn State Press, 2008) 57.

<sup>106</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, ‘Scattered Remarks’ (1999) 2(3) *European Journal of Social Theory* 334, 340.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

While the ‘freedom made nature,’ can be acquired by voluntary *or* compulsory participation in the new social practices, it is clear that Bourdieu allows for the possibility of change – albeit a possibility limited by *habitus*.<sup>108</sup> Moreover, he contemplated the possibility that once we recognise what it is that we want to change, we may be able to instigate change ourselves.

A few writers such as Crossley,<sup>109</sup> Spencer,<sup>110</sup> Tarr,<sup>111</sup> and Wade<sup>112</sup> have already pointed to particular pedagogic practices as ways of re-educating the body such as learning a particular dance style, learning the movements and routines of a circuit trainer, or acquiring the attributes and the hardened body of a mixed martial artist.

Crossley, for example, showed that *habitus* can change through conscious reflection. He was interested in how bodily habits can change through exercise, in a conscious process he described as ‘reflexive embodiment’.<sup>113</sup> People use reflexive body techniques such as exercise to ‘work back’ on their bodies, in order to ‘modify, maintain or thematize [them] in some way.’<sup>114</sup> As he explained, ‘[t]he jogger does not seek to transform the ground by pounding it nor to get their self from one place to another but rather to modify their body by working it.’<sup>115</sup>

Crossley used the case of the circuit class to illustrate how circuit trainers modify the *habitus* of participants. Participants in the classes must know how to perform certain sequences of movements that they are directed to perform by an instructor. They must not only recognise what move they need to perform, but also when to perform it so that the sequences of moves are continuous. This might include, for example, changing how they finish one move so that they are immediately ready to begin the next. Crossley said that this ‘presupposes that they know ‘without thinking what position they should be in to begin the next sequence.’<sup>116</sup> The response must be ‘automatic’<sup>117</sup>. However, the

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<sup>108</sup> Wacquant, ‘Towards a Reflexive Sociology’ above n 95, 45.

<sup>109</sup> Nick Crossley, ‘The Circuit Trainer’s Habitus: Reflexive Body Techniques and the Sociality of the Workout’ (2004) 10(1) *Body and Society* 37.

<sup>110</sup> Dale Spencer, ‘Habit(us), Body Techniques and Body Callousing: An Ethnography of Mixed Martial Arts’ (2009) 5(4) (2009) *Body and Society* 119.

<sup>111</sup> Tarr, above n 103.

<sup>112</sup> Lisa Wade, ‘The Emancipatory Promise of the Habitus: Lindy Hop, the Body, and Social Change’ (2011) 12 *Ethnography* 224.

<sup>113</sup> Crossley, *The Social Body* above n 20.

<sup>114</sup> Nick Crossley ‘Mapping Reflexive Body Techniques – On Body Modification and Maintenance’ (2005) 11(1) *Body and Society* 1.

<sup>115</sup> Crossley, ‘The Circuit Trainer’s Habitus’ above n 109, 38.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid* 45.

*habitus* of newcomers to the field is unstructured, so they must learn unfamiliar movements and commands in order to ‘reproduce the structure of the game.’<sup>118</sup>

The learning curve of the newcomer should also alert us to the necessity of ‘breaking the circle’ between habits and practice by recognizing the capacity of embodied agents to extend and thus transcend their existing repertoire of habits. The newcomer incorporates new practices and the practical and pre-reflective principles underlying them and does so simply by putting themselves in an unfamiliar situation and ...‘catching on’ to ‘the game.’ They modify their *habitus*.<sup>119</sup>

Another example of what Crossley referred to as ‘reflective embodiment’ occurs in the context of martial arts. Brown and Johnson<sup>120</sup> suggested that effective self-defence methods were developed in response to different historical, social, and political contexts such as the Samurai. This process resulted in a range of practices and *habitus*,<sup>121</sup> which endure in current martial arts practice. Brown and Johnson argued that a particular disposition of mind/body unity is necessarily embedded through the practice of martial arts, which ‘can be read as a result of the logic of practice or the realization that such a unity is essential for effective self defence. There quite simply is not time to “think” in a disembodied sense.’<sup>122</sup>

For example, I belong to a martial arts club. There is informal club wisdom that approximately 15,000 repetitions of a movement or a technique such as a block, punch or an evasion are required to embed that action into bodily memory. As a result, Brown and Johnson said:

...practice of the art becomes *the Way* and achievement can only be lived and developed through the further modification of essential dispositions. It cannot be won or awarded and has no definitive end point, It has to be lived as an end in itself ... [I]t is ...this practical logic that leads to the development of the necessary scheme of dispositions for effective self-defense.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid 53.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid 47.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid 52.

<sup>120</sup> David Brown and Alan Johnson, ‘The Social Practice of Self-Defense Martial Arts: Applications for Physical Education’ (2000) 52 *Quest* 246.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid 249.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid 251.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, 255.

Bourdieu also pointed out that,

intensive practice of a sport leads to a profound transformation of the subjective and objective experience of the body. It no longer exists only for others or, which amounts to the same thing, for the mirror . . . instead of being a body-for-others it becomes a body for oneself; the passive body becomes an active and acting body.<sup>124</sup>

Spencer has also considered how mixed martial artists used reflexive body techniques to develop what he termed 'body callousing'. This is the process through which these fighters construct the body they needed to participate in this sport: 'a body capable of both giving and taking pain.'<sup>125</sup> Fighters work back on their bodies using a complex of reflexive bodily techniques to harden their bodies and turn them into 'weapons.'<sup>126</sup> This is a world where 'habits collide'<sup>127</sup> as the fighters deliberately and continually divest themselves of some habits in favour of others.

In this way, the bodies of mixed martial artists, in common with many other martial artists, are constantly under construction as their style incorporates new ideas, new movements, and new boundaries, and as the fighters perpetually unlearn, learn and re-learn techniques. In this way, the mixed martial artist fighter's *habitus* is a 'lived-through structure-in-process.'<sup>128</sup> Wade has similarly argued that the gendered body can be re-educated and re-fashioned through learning a set of 'bodily tools' - in this case a dancing style known as the 'Lindy Hop'<sup>129</sup>.

How, then, might habits, and *habitus*, change through practice in 'body techniques' that are specifically designed to deal with threat and danger? Here we might learn from the work of writers have looked into the experiences of women entering traditionally masculine fields.

Sasson-Levy has explored the gendered experiences of women soldiers fulfilling non-traditional roles in Israeli military service. She argued that female soldier who acted in masculine roles such as combat training, constructed alternative gender identities by

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<sup>124</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination* (Stanford University Press, 2001) 67.

<sup>125</sup> Spencer, above n 110, 120.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid 127.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid 126.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid 120.

<sup>129</sup> Wade, above n 112.



adopting the identity practices of male combat personnel.<sup>130</sup> ‘In adopting the patterns of combat soldiers, women soldiers assert their own identity and shape it to their liking, in contrast to the identity imposed on women in the army.’<sup>131</sup> These practices are disruptive of hegemonic military gender regimes because they challenge fixed, simplistic relationships between sexed bodies and gender. Paradoxically, however, the practices are also collaborative with those gender regimes, because they affirm perceptions that soldiering is a masculine endeavour.<sup>132</sup>

Boxing is another example of women entering a masculine field. Brown pointed out that female boxers condition their bodies by using a number of stereotypically masculine practices as they engage with objects like punching bags, gloves, and the boxing ring, and in their negotiations with social spaces.<sup>133</sup> At the ‘material’ level of *habitus*, Brown argued that these practices radically disrupt traditional “feminine” ways of moving and feeling the body and engaging with other peoples’ bodies.<sup>134</sup>

These writers have all described experiences that become habitual through practice and repetition. Some writers have emphasised that people can only create new practices through intentional conscious reflection. Tarr, for example, has written about a process of learning ways of changing bodily habits by bringing them into conscious awareness.<sup>135</sup> Tarr examined the Alexander Technique, which is a practical method of teaching people how to recognise and change habitual bodily movements. In other words, it is a form of bodily re-education<sup>136</sup> aimed to change ‘not only the habits of an individual, but also his or her *habitus*, resulting in more significant and potentially cultural change’.<sup>137</sup> The Alexander Technique teaches *inhibition*, which is:

...the middle step between reacting habitually and making choices about one’s actions: in between these steps, one inhibits ones habitual responses, stops, and consciously reconsiders one’s decisions<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Orna Sasson-Levy ‘Feminism and Military Gender Practices: Israeli Women Soldiers in “Masculine” Roles’ (2003) 73(3) *Sociological Inquiry* 440.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid* 446.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>133</sup> David Brown, Pierre Bourdieu’s ‘Masculine Domination’ Thesis and the Gendered Body in Sport and Physical Culture’ (2006) 23 *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 162, 172.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid* 489.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid* 477.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid* 490.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid* 484.

Similarly, McCaughey has suggested that femininity can be unlearned through self-defence training as a process she referred to as ‘consciousness raising’.<sup>139</sup> For McCaughey, the ‘nice girl’ is itself an internalised bodily disposition ‘mostly taken for granted as natural.’<sup>140</sup> Women can, however, ‘rehearse a new script for bodily comportment’<sup>141</sup> through self-defence, which McCaughey described as a ‘reprogramming regimen for the body’.<sup>142</sup> As McCaughey put it:

[L]earning self-defense is sort of like learning to drive a car on the opposite side of the road in a foreign country. Anyone who's done this knows how conscious one's actions behind the wheel suddenly become. The turning and signaling and looking that were second nature become strained and stressful, perplexing and purposeful gestures. In much the same way, acquiring an aggressive response system takes purposeful reflection and mindful motions.<sup>143</sup>

She insisted that women must inscribe self-defence into their bodily schema,<sup>144</sup> and practice realistically so that this becomes a ‘bodily memory.’<sup>145</sup> Women internalise a ‘new bodily disposition’ because of this bodily re-education.<sup>146</sup> However, as I mentioned earlier, this kind self-manipulation appears to require some kind of conscious intervention: that is, it suggests that in order to change our bodily habits, we need first to be aware of them. This observation has relevance to work done by social psychologists like Bandura, who has developed what has come to be known as ‘self-efficacy theory’.

### **Self-efficacy theory and the potential for transformation**

None of the writers referred to above have really considered how or why it is that people would persist with strategies for bodily re-education to the extent that these new ways of being become habituated and potentially transform older, contradictory aspects of that person’s identity. Nor has Bourdieu really provided any conceptual basis, which

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<sup>139</sup> Martha McCaughey, ‘The Fighting Spirit: Women’s Self-Defense Training and the Discourse of Sexed Embodiment’ (1988) 12(3) *Gender and Society* 277, 288

<sup>140</sup> Ibid 292.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid 281.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid 286.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid 285.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid 292.

would to help me recognise what kinds of improvisations individuals can make, and how and why they would make them within the limits of habitus. I turned to Bandura's work on 'self-efficacy' for guidance. Bandura and others have used self-efficacy theory as a framework to explore people's perceptions about their capabilities.

Bandura has argued that human agency is characterised by core features that include intentionality (intentional conduct), forethought, self-regulation and self-reflectiveness about our capabilities.<sup>147</sup> He said that we are not only agents of action but 'self-examiners',<sup>148</sup> and this capacity to self-reflect on ourselves and the adequacy or not of our actions is a central feature of agency.<sup>149</sup> Indeed, he argued that 'efficacy beliefs are the foundation of human agency'.<sup>150</sup> He said:

Unless people believe they can produce desired results and forestall detrimental ones by their actions, they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties.<sup>151</sup>

A person's 'self-efficacy' is that person's belief about their own ability to perform a certain task.<sup>152</sup> Self-efficacy can be approached as a general disposition, or as a disposition relevant to a specific situation, such as self-defence or physical competency. The theory is based on the idea that our moods and actions significantly depend on a sense of our own abilities to control the environment, or what happens to people.<sup>153</sup> This sense of personal mastery increases the likelihood of the person accomplishing his or her objective.<sup>154</sup> This indicates that people who have low self-efficacy are less likely to complete objectives or tasks than those with high self-efficacy.<sup>155</sup> On the one hand, people who have confidence in their abilities see challenges which can be managed when they approach threatening situations. On the other hand, people who lack confidence in their abilities will withdraw from challenges that threaten them, because they are overwhelmed by what they perceive as their own shortfall in ability, the

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<sup>147</sup> Albert Bandura, 'Social Cognitive Theory: An Agentic Perspective' (2001) 52 *Annual Review of Psychology*

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid10.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid10.

<sup>150</sup> Albert Bandura, 'Self-Efficacy Mechanism in Human Agency' (1982) 37 (2) *American Psychologist* .

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Albert Bandura, 'Self-Efficacy' in H Friedman (ed), *Encyclopedia of Mental Health* (Academic Press, reprint, 1998) 71.

<sup>153</sup> Patricia McDaniel, 'Self-Defense Training, and Women's Fear of Crime' (1993) 1 *Women's Studies International Forum* 37, 37.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Bandura, 'Self-Efficacy' above n 152.

difficulty of the challenges that threaten them, the likely poor outcome, and so on.<sup>156</sup>

Bandura explained that,

threat is a relational property concerning the match between perceived coping capabilities and potentially detrimental aspects of the environment. The same potential threats are frightful to people beset with doubts they can control them, but relatively benign to those who feel assured they can override them. Self-appraisal of coping capabilities, research indicates that physical self –defence therefore, determines, in large part, the subjective perilousness of environments (Bandura, 1997).<sup>157</sup>

Our self-efficacy beliefs can change as a consequence of our social experiences.<sup>158</sup>

Bandura described four ways in which we can change our self-efficacy. These are the achievement of mastery experience through perseverance in overcoming challenges; vicarious experiences through social role models; social persuasion; and reductions in the misinterpretation of emotional and physical reactions.<sup>159</sup> I will now elaborate on each of these approaches.

Bandura thought the most effective means of changing self-efficacy was through ‘mastery experiences’.<sup>160</sup> A mastery experience is essentially one in which a person has been successful in performing a task. For example, a person who can successfully perform self-defence techniques is likely to have a stronger self-defence self-efficacy than someone who is not able to perform those techniques. Successes build a robust belief in one's personal efficacy, but failures undermine it – particularly if failures occur before a sense of efficacy is firmly established.<sup>161</sup>

Mastery experiences can involve learning and acquiring new skills that take time to develop or implement effectively, such as the types of techniques that are taught in self-defence courses. The second source involves modeling, that is, where a person learns by observing how others perform the same action. This can be reinforced in a classroom environment when students of similar size, ability and endurance are

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Charles C Benight and Albert Bandura, ‘Social Cognitive Theory of Posttraumatic Recovery - The Role of Perceived Self-Efficacy’ (2004) 42 *Behaviour Research and Therapy* 1129, 1131.

<sup>158</sup> Julie C Weitlauf, Ronald E Smith and Daniel Cervone, ‘Generalization Effects of Coping-Skills Training: Influence of Self-Defense Training on Women’s Efficacy Beliefs, Assertiveness, and Aggression’ (2000) 85 *Journal of Applied Psychology* 625, 625.

<sup>159</sup> Bandura, ‘Self-Efficacy’ above n 152.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid, 71-72

<sup>161</sup> Ibid

successful in meeting the particular challenges of the lesson. Social persuasion through positive evaluations of a student's performance can also be a source of self-efficacy – although, as Bandura noted, this requires an environment that allows for success.<sup>162</sup> This might mean that self-defence training skills should be developed incrementally to minimise early experiences of failure.

The final source suggests that self-efficacy can be acquired by 'physiological indicants of capacity'.<sup>163</sup> In this way, the sensation of 'butterflies in the stomach', may be variously attributed to psychic phenomenon like anticipation, stress, excitement, worry or concern and so could be interpreted as an indicator of his or her own incapacity by a person with a low belief in self-efficacy. A person with a strong belief in his or her self-efficacy, however, would not associate such physiological responses with ability.

Bandura's ideas, therefore, open up a way of thinking about how practice might become habit(us). But the idea of change suggests that new dispositions of the *habitus* must be enduring and inculcated into the body through practice. Accordingly, the idea that people are more likely to complete a task if they feel they are achieving some success explains why the mixed martial artist, the circuit trainer, and the Lindy Hopper persist with their various bodily re-educations.

More importantly, this points to the kinds of practices through which women may potentially refashion their identities. What is required is 'a strategic pedagogic practice intended to override...[the conditionings undergone]'.<sup>164</sup> These are experiences, which enable women to successfully accomplish particular physical tasks they might previously considered to be beyond their capabilities. If women find they are capable of performing a physical act they had thought was beyond them, they are more likely to practice so that over time those dispositions — namely, the particular skill and the experience of acquiring the skill — are also embodied.

I want next to consider the possibilities offered by Bandura in the context of the specific pedagogic practice of self defence training but first, a point needs to be made about the relevance that Bandura's theory has to my paradigm of inquiry: constructivism. Specifically: does Bandura's theory allow for the position of

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Elizabeth M Ozer and Albert Bandura, 'Mechanisms Governing Empowerment Effects: A Self- Efficacy Analysis' (1990) 58 *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 472, 473.

<sup>164</sup> Bourdieu, 'Scattered Remarks' above n 106, 340.

constructivists who acknowledge that the social world arises out of countless social interactions? Does this mean that it is also variable? I think it does.

Constructivism holds that people are active in construction of their experiences. At first glance, this is at odds with Bandura, because he has sometimes been described as a ‘behaviorist’<sup>165</sup> based on his earlier work.<sup>166</sup> However, Bandura is probably best described as a ‘cognitive theorist’,<sup>167</sup> which describes the focus of his work over the last few decades. Having moved away from behaviorism, Bandura emphasised the role of human agency in his work and argued that ‘what people think, believe, and feel affects how they behave.’<sup>168</sup> A significant part of his work emphasised people’s abilities to self-regulate,<sup>169</sup> self-reflect, and influence their own behavior.<sup>170</sup> Under this approach, people create their own meaning and therefore are active rather than passive agents ‘in their own motivation’.<sup>171</sup> He said:

While beliefs provide direction and meaning to experience, they distort it as well. Adherents see what they want to see, reinterpret incongruities to their liking, and even rewrite their memory of events they have experienced. Moreover, by influencing actions anticipatorily, beliefs channel social interactions in ways that create their own self-validating results.<sup>172</sup>

There is, of course, another tension here between my reliance on a constructivist paradigm and Bourdieu’s conceptual framework, which has to do with the different approaches that constructivists and Bourdieu have to the likelihood of people engaging in processes designed to change aspects of their identity. I will address in more detail in the following chapter.

For now, I will say that common to Bandura and constructivism is this idea that people can construct their own understanding of their worlds through reflection. I rely on this idea, in part, to counter suggestions of determinism in Bourdieu’s work. The potential for self-reflective change in Bandura’s theory, combined with constructivism’s

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<sup>165</sup> B F Skinner, *Science and Human Behavior* (The Free Press, 1953) .

<sup>166</sup> Joan E Grusec, ‘Social Learning Theory and Developmental Psychology – The Legacies of Robert Sears and Albert Bandura’ (1992) 28(5) *Developmental Psychology* 776, 776.

<sup>167</sup> Albert Bandura, *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory* (Prentice Hall, 1986).

<sup>168</sup> Ibid 25.

<sup>169</sup> Grusec, above n 166 782.

<sup>170</sup> Bandura, *Social Foundations of Thought and Action*, above n 167.

<sup>171</sup> Albert Bandura, *Self-Efficacy : The Exercise of Control* (W H Freeman , 1997) 133.

<sup>172</sup> Bandura, *Social Foundations of Thought and Action*, above n 167, 36.

emphasis on the potential in individuals to create new realities offers a more productive position to understand how women experience their identities.

### **The transformative potential of self-defence training**

Several studies have researched the effectiveness of self-defence courses, which were specifically designed to teach women physical skills and other strategies for rape avoidance.<sup>173</sup> In particular, Ozer and Bandura researched the development of self-efficacy in female self-defence students.<sup>174</sup> They found the students experienced increased self-defence self-efficacy as a result of their participation.<sup>175</sup> While the effects of the increased self-defence self-efficacy had declined when the students were tested six months later,<sup>176</sup> the increases in the women's physical efficacy were more persistent.

Cox later compared these findings with research of a traditional martial arts school and of a women's self-defence course.<sup>177</sup> The female participants in both groups reported increased feelings of self-defence self-efficacy, and activity self-efficacy as the result of their participation.<sup>178</sup> Cox's findings suggested that courses which provide opportunities for students to actively practice their self defence skills, as well as the opportunity to learn vicariously by watching others, increased women's sense of self-efficacy – even if that effect was only temporary.<sup>179</sup> Interestingly, women who had not sought out self-defence training experienced higher self-efficacy than those who were interested in training. This area is under-researched.<sup>180</sup> Cox suggested that one reason

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<sup>173</sup> Kari L Fraser and Glenda M Russell, 'The Role of the Group in Acquiring Self-Defense Skills: Results of a Qualitative Study' (2000) 31 *Small Group Research* 397; Ozer and Bandura, above n 163; Susan O Michener, *An Analysis of Rape Aggression Defense as a Method of Self-Empowerment for Women*, (D Phil Thesis, Walden University, 1996) 78; Darcy Shannon Cox, *An Analysis of Two Forms of Self Defense Training and Their Impact on Women's Sense of Personal Safety Self-Efficacy* (D Psych Thesis, Eastern Virginia Medical School Norfolk State University, 1999); Lisa Brooke Shaffer, *An Application of Physical Feminism Theory to Women's Gender Role and Self-Defense Training* (D Psych Thesis, Alliant International University, 2003); Catherine Gockley, 'Hear Me Roar: 'Model Mugging' Self Defense Courses Teach Women To Fight Back Under Attack And Win' (1992) 10 *American Fitness* 52

<sup>174</sup> Bandura, 'Self-Efficacy', above n 152,

<sup>175</sup> Ozer and Bandura, above n 163, 484.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid 478.

<sup>177</sup> Cox, above n 173.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid 67.

<sup>179</sup> Cox, above n 183, 67; See also Leanne R Brecklin, 'Evaluation Outcomes of Self-Defense Training for Women - A Review' (2008) 13 *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 60,72.

<sup>180</sup> Brecklin, above n 179, 72.

for this result may be because women who *want* to take a self-defence class are not confident in their existing self-defence abilities.<sup>181</sup> There are likely to be other factors such as previous victimisation or the different personalities of the participants.<sup>182</sup>

Brecklin also used self-efficacy theory to suggest that providing women with realistic experiences of fighting back against simulated assaults would be very effective in teaching self-defence skills. McCaughey described the experiences of students using full force techniques<sup>183</sup> against padded attackers:<sup>184</sup>

Because the “muggers” attack the students at full force and accompany their attacks with affronting verbal remarks... the attacks feel quite real to the students. This enables women to learn their defense techniques while their adrenaline level is high and their fine tune motor skills low, thus committing the skills to ‘bodily memory’.<sup>185</sup>

Other studies have consistently reported that, in addition to increased self-defence self-efficacy,<sup>186</sup> women experienced increased self-confidence,<sup>187</sup> self-esteem,<sup>188</sup> assertiveness<sup>189</sup> and an increased ability to recognise risk as a result of their participation in training.<sup>190</sup> Their perceptions about their own helplessness also decreased, which improved their perceptions about environmental safety<sup>191</sup> and reduced their fears and anxieties,<sup>192</sup> including fears about rape.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Cox, above n 173 68.

<sup>182</sup> Brecklin, above n 179, 72.

<sup>183</sup> A full force technique is simply hitting, kicking or otherwise striking another person with as much strength and power as possible

<sup>184</sup> Brecklin, above n 179, 72.

<sup>185</sup> Martha McCaughey, *Real Knockouts -The Physical Feminism of Women’s Self-Defense* (1997) 61.

<sup>186</sup> Michener, above n 172,78; Cox, above n 173 67; Lindsay M Orchowski, Christine A Gidycz, and Holly Raffle, ‘Evaluation of a Sexual Assault Risk Reduction and Self-Defense Program: A Prospective Analysis of a Revised Protocol’ (2008) 32 *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 204 ; Brecklin, above n 179.

<sup>187</sup> Michener, above n 173,78; Leanne R Brecklin, ‘Self-Defense/Assertiveness Training, Women’s Victimization History, and Psychological Characteristics’ (2004) 10 *Violence Against Women* 479; Carol Harding and Joan Nelson, ‘Educating for Self-Defense: Information and Physical Strategies Can Protect Women and Children Against Violent Attack’ (1985) 57 *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance* 112.

<sup>188</sup> Michener, above n 173,78; however see Yumi Akuzawa Foster, ‘Brief Aikido Training Versus Karate and Golf Training And University Students’ Scores on Self-Esteem, Anxiety, and Expression of Anger’ (1997) 84 *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 609.

<sup>189</sup> Shaffer, above n 173, 69.

<sup>190</sup> Weitlauf et al, above n 158, 632 .

<sup>191</sup> Michener, above n 173,78; Jocelyn A Hollander, ‘“I Can Take Care of Myself” - The Impact of Self-Defense Training on Women’s Lives’ (2004) 10 *Violence Against Women* 205, 223.

<sup>192</sup> McCaughey, above n 185; Ozer and Bandura , above n 163, 481 ; McDaniel, above n 153, 42. Hollander, ‘“I Can Take Care of Myself”, above n 192, 223.

<sup>193</sup> McDaniel, above n 153.



In addition, Hollander found that students who participated in a self-defence course became more positive about their own physical competence and strength.<sup>194</sup> She noted that,

[u]nless they have participated in contact sports, many women have never had the opportunity to experience their bodies in a powerful way....In self-defense classes... women both observe and experience strength and power in a female body. As they begin to feel that their bodies can protect them, rather than make them vulnerable, the value and respect they accord their body increases.<sup>195</sup>

Fraser and Russell researched a group of women participating in a self-defence course. This course allowed students to use their full force on their instructors in simulated attack scenarios. They found that the sense of self-assurance the women acquired as a result of their participation could be self-protective *per se* because of their confidence about being able to deal with aggressive behaviours early in a potentially threatening situation.<sup>196</sup> Other researchers like Hollander have described similar responses<sup>197</sup> in relation to other self-defence training.<sup>198</sup>

This suggests that women can re-educate their bodies through practice, even if temporarily. But, it is not clear how long these effects last. Changes in habitus must be persistent to come to be *durable* dispositions: otherwise, as with the newcomer to circuit training, they are neither structured nor structuring.

There is evidence that at least some of these changes in disposition continue for some time after the training has been completed.<sup>199</sup> For example, Weitlauf et al found that a self-defence training programme conducted by one of the researchers significantly improved the students' understandings of their own physical self-defence competencies. These dispositions endured for and the students also reported that they

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<sup>194</sup> Hollander, '“I Can Take Care of Myself”', above n 191, 221. See also McDaniel, above n 153.

<sup>195</sup> Hollander, '“I Can Take Care of Myself”', above n 191.

<sup>196</sup> Fraser and Russell, above n 173.

<sup>197</sup> Hollander, '“I Can Take Care of Myself”', above n 192, 214.

<sup>198</sup> For example, a study by Meadows indicated that chemical agent (tear gas) training increased women's confidence in relation to self-protection while Richman and Rehberg found that martial arts participation can have a positive outcome on participant's self-concept and self-esteem: R R J Meadows, 'The Self-Protection Course and its Effect on Fear Perceptions of Women' (1989) 10 (9) *Personality and Individual Differences*; C L Richman and H Rehberg, 'The Development of Self-Esteem Through the Martial Arts' (1986) 17 *International Journal of Sport Psychology* 234.

<sup>199</sup> Ozer and Bandura, above n 163; Michener, above n 173; Brecklin, above n 179. See also Jocelyn A Hollander, 'Why do Women Take Self Defence Classes', (2010) 16(4) *Violence Against Women* 459-478.

experienced similar feelings in other facets of their lives.<sup>200</sup> Yet, Brecklin's review of twenty evaluation outcomes of self-defence training courses for women suggests that the dispositions acquired through self-defence training were not long-lasting.<sup>201</sup>

Unfortunately, these studies did not consider how much time and effort the students spent in their training, or practicing their new skills after training had completed. Neither did these studies consider what influence these experiences might have had on the initial acquisition of dispositions of self-efficacy and self-defence efficacy. This may be significant because as Bandura and Adams explained, people's perceptions about their self-efficacy affects how they choose what they do, but also how much effort they put into activities despite antipathetic experiences.<sup>202</sup> The outcome is that:

[[t]hose who persist in subjectively threatening activities will eventually eliminate their inhibitions through corrective experience, whereas those who avoid what they fear ... will retain their self-debilitating expectations and defensive behaviours.<sup>203</sup>

In other words, perceptions about self-efficacy may be crucial to the potential of the *habitus* to change. This leads to thinking about the kinds of experiences women have with self-defence training, because while a change in *habitus* might be promoted through training, the transformative potential of learning about self-defence is complicated by the range of available options for women. Not all training is the same.

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<sup>200</sup> Weitlauf et al above n 158, 632.

<sup>201</sup> Brecklin, above n 179, 65; Marie Antoinette Mastria, *A Study of Assertiveness as a Function of Training in Rape Prevention and Assertive Training* (D Psych Thesis, University of Southern Mississippi, 1975); Weitlauf et al, above n 158; Julie C Weitlauf, Daniel Cervone, Ronald E Smith and P M Wright, 'Assessing Generalization in Perceived Self-Efficacy: Multidomain and Global Assessments of the Effects of Self-Defense Training for Women' (2001) 27 *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 1683; Joan Lidsker, *Women And Self-Defense Training: A Study Of Psychological Changes Experienced By Participants In Relation To Assault History* (D Psych Thesis, Pacific Graduate School of Psychology, 1991); Michener, above n 183.

<sup>202</sup> Albert Bandura and Nancy E Adams 'Analysis of Self-Efficacy Theory of Behavioural Change' (1977) 1(4) *Cognitive Therapy and Research* 287, 288.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid 288.

## Conclusion

We are pre-disposed to act according to what we know of the world and in the ways, which *habitus* enables. This also tends to frame our perceptions of our own capabilities and/or limitations. In his review of Wilson's *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*,<sup>204</sup> Canto pointed out that,

[a] crack addict's habitus... does not only internalize the values, behaviours, and beliefs of the drug culture, but it also constructs and perpetuates the values, behaviours, and beliefs of this drug culture by engaging and expanding the existence of a drug culture. An underclass member's self-efficacy, in other words, is moulded by one's ghetto culture while at the same time one is also constructing and perpetuating this ghetto culture by 'living-out' the values, behaviours, and beliefs of this culture.<sup>205</sup>

Similarly, women internalise and re-generate the values, behaviour and beliefs of a gendered physical culture where it is 'normal' for them to feel weak and ineffectual in physical contexts. Although it is never really clear where and how consciousness and reflexivity are placed in Bourdieu's conceptualisation<sup>206</sup> of the *habitus*, of which gender is absolutely a fundamental dimension'.<sup>207</sup> This marked the limits of reflective practice for Bourdieu.

Within those limits however, the potential for individual agency and reflexivity is acknowledged in the blips or misfire of *habitus*<sup>208</sup> 'when the routine adjustment of subjective and objective structures is brutally disrupted,<sup>209</sup> and also in human improvisation, such as of the pianist or gymnast.<sup>210</sup>

In this chapter, I have suggested that Bandura's theory of self-efficacy offers a new direction to thinking about how individual *habitus* can change. This theory reveals the possibility of transforming those aspects of women's *habitus*, which make them feel weak and disempowered, by changing how they feel about their physical capabilities.

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<sup>204</sup> William Julius Wilson, *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor* (1997)

<sup>205</sup> Jose Zachary Canto, 'A Review of *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor* by William Julius Wilson, Fall/Winter 2007/2008) 3(2) *NeoAmericanist* <http://www.neoamericanist.org/review/canto-review-when-work-disappears>.

<sup>206</sup> Jenkins, above n 39, 77.

<sup>207</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, cited in Beate Krais, 'Gender, Sociological Theory and Bourdieu's Sociology of Practice', (2006) 23 *Theory Culture Society* 119, 128.

<sup>208</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations* (Stanford University Press, 1997) 162.

<sup>209</sup> Wacquant, 'Towards a Reflexive Sociology' above n 95, 45.

<sup>210</sup> Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations* above n 208, 162.

This involves unlearning and re-learning bodily habits and physical practices. Writers such as Horvat and Davis,<sup>211</sup> Wade,<sup>212</sup> Spencer<sup>213</sup>, Crossley<sup>214</sup>, and Tarr<sup>215</sup> have already shown how an educational experience can change the *habitus* and the latter have shown how this can be accomplished through physical practice.

For the purpose of my thesis, I am particularly interested in the possibilities of transforming gendered *habitus* by increasing women's positive feelings about their physical identities through self-defence training. Research indicates that at least some self-defence training can improve women's feelings of self-efficacy, confidence and self-esteem, which are central to the ways in which women live their bodies. However, it appears that these effects are not necessarily long-lasting. The transformative potential of this learning process is unfortunately unclear because the issue of what women should learn in self-defence, how they should learn, and who should teach them is blurry at best.

In the next chapter, I begin to spell out the basis of my own research project, beginning with the methodological assumptions and processes of my research.

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<sup>211</sup> Horvat and Davis, above n 87.

<sup>212</sup> Wade, above n 112.

<sup>213</sup> Spencer, above n 110, 120.

<sup>214</sup> Crossley, 'Mapping Reflexive Body Techniques', above n 114; Crossley, 'The Circuit Trainer's Habitus', above n 109.

<sup>215</sup> Tarr, above n 103.

## Chapter 4 THINKING ABOUT METHOD

Social research is something much too serious and much too difficult that we can allow ourselves to mistake scientific rigidity, which is the nemesis of intelligence and invention, for scientific rigor, and thus to deprive ourselves of this or that resource available in the full panoply of traditions of our discipline-and of the sister disciplines of anthropology, economics, history, etc. In such matters, I would dare say that one rule only applies: 'it is forbidden to forbid.' So watch out for methodological watchdogs!

Pierre Bourdieu 1991<sup>1</sup>

The essential puzzle that has animated my research begins with an identity. This is an identity that emphasises weakness, vulnerability, passiveness, and physical incompetence in the face of physical threat or danger. It is an identity shared by many women in Australia, and one that I have shared myself. However, on one occasion, I momentarily experienced a different identity in which I knew myself as strong, capable, and invincible. The puzzle is simply this – how and why was that transformation possible?

My approach to this puzzle has been to identify and address a series of questions. I began by asking what light do categories like 'identity', and 'gendered *habitus*' shed on this aspect of women's experience? I have argued that these categories and a range of relevant theoretical frameworks provided by Bourdieu, as well as a large body of empirical research work, provides the elements of an important interpretative approach.

I have also gone on to ask these further questions:

To what extent is women's gendered identity as female/feminine an embodied phenomenon?

How do girls and women embody their identities, again with regard to those elements, which women draw on when they describe themselves as vulnerable, passive, and physically timid?

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<sup>1</sup> Loïc Wacquant, 'Towards a Reflexive Sociology: a Workshop with Pierre Bourdieu' (1989) 7(1) *Sociological Theory* 26, 54; Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 227

Is it possible that the embodied aspects of women's gendered identity as female/feminine might be transformed by purposive pedagogic projects like self-defence training?

In this chapter, I will address several questions. Firstly, I ask in what ways a constructivist paradigm will enable me to address my research questions. I should note that I use the category of *constructivism* when referring to the epistemic or interpretative assumptions that orient my research, and refer to the idea of *naturalistic study* <https://webems.rmit.edu.au/gw/webacc/82f2b33b37c06bdf18ff71eb4562c6239f4de170/GWA/P/AREF/2?action=Attachment.View&error=fileview&Item.Attachment.filename=Chapter+4++21st+Aug++for+Rob%2edocx&Item.Attachment.id=2&User.context=82f2b33b37c06bdf18ff71eb4562c6239f4de170&Item.drn=223531z23z0&Item.Child.id=&Item.Attachment.alloViewNative=1 - footnote19> when referring to the *design* of the project and how I carried out my inquiry.

Secondly, I have drawn heavily on Bourdieu's account of *habitus* and practice work. Bourdieu, however, rejected the constructivist tradition as an inadequate basis for his reflexive sociology, so I need to reconcile the two positions that are at stake here.

Finally, I will explain the choice of the research design that I have adopted: namely, the design and delivery of two self-defence courses run for young women in secondary girls' schools. As I will indicate here, using what is called a naturalistic research design is an appropriate method to address the question of whether women's gendered identity as vulnerable, passive, and physically timid could be transformed by purposive pedagogic projects like self-defence training.

## Paradigmatic decisions

Across the broad range of the social sciences, researchers typically have available any number of research traditions or paradigms. According to Guba and Lincoln, a researcher's paradigm represents a set of beliefs or '*worldview* that defines the nature of the 'world', the individual's place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts.'<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Egon G Guba, and Yvonna S Lincoln, 'Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues' in Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy, *Approaches to Qualitative Research: A Reader on Theory and Practice* (Oxford University Press, 2004) 17, 21; Egon G Guba (ed), *The Paradigm Dialog* (Sage, 1990) 17.

Paradigms, therefore, guide action and enable researchers who hold similar beliefs to communicate a shared 'frame of reference': that is, a shared set of symbols, values assumptions, guiding rules, and criteria.<sup>3</sup>

This belief system is determined by the responses we give to and the assumptions we make about the nature of reality, the best ways to secure credible knowledge, and the various techniques we use to find out what is going on.<sup>4</sup> Each shared set of beliefs opens up different interpretations, different emphases, and different – although occasionally complementary – assumptions. The interdisciplinary features of qualitative inquiry,<sup>5</sup> in particular, promote the borrowing and interweaving of multiple, and sometimes previously incompatible, viewpoints.<sup>6</sup>

A naturalistic or constructivist inquiry is just one of several inquiry paradigms for investigating and discovering understanding.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, I was confronted at the outset by the multi-paradigmatic nature of social science research and an overwhelming array of theoretical stances.

To begin, I knew I wanted to use qualitative methods of inquiry to explore my research questions because I was interested in how women understand their identities and how they experience those identities physically. Qualitative methods were more likely than quantitative methods to provide rich descriptions of the phenomena I was interested in and also enhance my understanding of the context in which the action took place. In other words, I wanted to understand why women feel weak, vulnerable, and fragile, and whether they can change those aspects of their identity that relate to disempowerment through self-defence training. I believe that the best place to investigate these questions is in the natural setting of a self-defence training course.

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<sup>3</sup> John Hughes and Wesley Sharrock, *The Philosophy of Social Research* (Longman, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed, 1997) 81; David A Erlandson, Edward L Harris, Barbara L Skipper and Steve D Allen, *Doing Naturalistic Inquiry: A Guide to Method* (Sage, 1993) 9; Egon G Guba, 'Introduction' in David A Erlandson, Edward L Harris, Barbara L Skipper and Steve D Allen, *Doing Naturalistic Inquiry: A Guide to Method* (Sage, 1993) xiii.

<sup>4</sup> Egon G Guba and Yvonna S Lincoln, 'Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research' in Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S Lincoln (eds) *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Sage, 1994) 108; Egon G Guba and Yvonna S Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation* (Sage, 1989) 83.

<sup>5</sup> Yvonna S Lincoln and Egon G Guba, 'Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences', in Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S Lincoln (eds) *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Sage, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, 2000) 163, 164.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid 167.

<sup>7</sup> Egon G Guba, 'Criteria for Assessing the Trustworthiness of Naturalistic Inquiries' (1981) 29 *Educational Communication and Technology Journal* 75. Guba and Lincoln adopted the term 'naturalistic' in formative writing (1981, 1985) but later preferred the term 'constructivist' (1989), in part because of the association of 'naturalism with the natural sciences.

I also needed to acknowledge that I was deeply embedded in the inquiry process because of my values, which prompted the inquiry in the first place, and because I was the self-defence instructor, who had particular views about women's physicality and what women should learn in self-defence. Furthermore, it was likely that the girls' perceptions about these matters would be highly contextualized to the setting of the inquiry.

My review of the approach that Guba and Lincoln have advocated confirmed my belief that the assumptions and processes of a constructivist inquiry was the best fit for my research.<sup>8</sup> As I have discussed earlier in my thesis however, I also rely heavily on the theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu, which he described as *constructivist structuralism* or *structuralist constructivism*.<sup>9</sup> I discuss the potential tension between these two approaches below.

Before that, however, I will outline the assumptions of a constructivist inquiry as conceptualised by Lincoln and Guba, and explain how my research meets the key assumptions of a constructivist enquiry.

### **Constructivist inquiry and naturalistic study**

Lincoln and Guba have proposed the use of a naturalistic/constructivist model of inquiry as an alternative to empiricist inquiry. As I referred to earlier, I use the term *naturalistic study* when I refer to the *design* of my project and how I carried out my inquiry.<sup>10</sup> The requirements of a naturalistic study are set out further in this chapter. Constructivist inquiry is also sometimes described as qualitative inquiry, but the terms are not synonymous.<sup>11</sup> Guba and

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<sup>8</sup> Egon G Guba and Yvonna S Lincoln, *Effective Evaluation* (Jossey-Bass, 1981); Guba, 'Criteria for Assessing the Trustworthiness of Naturalistic Inquiries', above n 7; Egon G Guba, and Yvonna S Lincoln, 'Epistemological and Methodological Bases of Naturalistic Inquiry' (1982) 30 *Education Communication and Technology Journal* 233; Yvonna S Lincoln and Egon G Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Sage, 1985); Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, above n 4; Yvonna S Lincoln, 'The Making of a Constructivist: A Remembrance of Transformations Past' in Guba, *The Paradigm Dialog*, above n 2, 67; Egon G Guba, 'The Alternative Paradigm Dialog' in Guba, *The Paradigm Dialog*, above n 2; Egon G Guba and Yvonna S Lincoln, 'Naturalistic and Rationalistic Enquiry' in J P Keeves and G Lakomski (eds), *Issues in Educational Research* (Emerald Group, 1999) 146; Lincoln and Guba 'Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences', above n 5; Yvonna S Lincoln, 'Emerging Criteria for Quality in Qualitative and Interpretative Research' in Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S Lincoln (eds), *The Qualitative Inquiry Reader* (Sage, 2002) 327; Guba and Lincoln, 'Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research : Theories and Issues', above n 2.

<sup>9</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, 'Social Space and Symbolic Power' (1989) 7(1) *Sociological Theory* 14, 14.

<sup>10</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 187.

<sup>11</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 198. See also Robert G Owens, 'Methodological Rigor in Naturalistic Inquiry: Some Issues and Answers' (1982) 18 (2) *Education Administration Quarterly* 1, 7. Owens



Lincoln preferred that the term *qualitative* be used to describe types of *methods*, and that questions of paradigm should guide questions of method.<sup>12</sup>

Constructivist inquiry is also necessarily interpretivist. Interpretivism resulted from concerns that empiricist frameworks were not applicable to human inquiry<sup>13</sup> as the ‘language of the natural sciences’ was not the ‘language of the human sciences’.<sup>14</sup> Although interpretivism influences all levels of inquiry, and all assumptions about inquiry, because all research is interpretive, the philosophical underpinnings of interpretivism offered paradigmatic alternatives to interpreting human social life.<sup>15</sup> An interpretive-realist paradigm asks different questions to a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm, or a feminist-interpretivist paradigm,<sup>16</sup> about understandings of reality, and knowing..<sup>17</sup>

Constructivism and interpretivism do, however, share an intellectual heritage:<sup>18</sup> both want to understand the subjective experiences of social actors.<sup>19</sup> That aim is accomplished through interpretation. Schwandt has suggested that the meanings of the terms ‘constructivist, constructivism, interpretivist and interpretivism’ are essentially ‘shaped by the intent of their users.’<sup>20</sup>

## **Paradigmatic assumptions of a constructivist inquiry**

Guba and Lincoln explained that the naturalistic/constructivist paradigm involves a rejection of features such as an empiricist methodology, as the pursuit of generalisability,<sup>21</sup> and underlying theoretical assumptions of a single, knowable reality divisible into variables which can be studied objectively.<sup>22</sup> That is, making assumptions about the independence of

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described ‘qualitative’ as alluding to the nature of the understanding sought and ‘naturalistic’ as alluding to the ways in which reality maybe examined.

<sup>12</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 198.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas A Schwandt, ‘Constructivist, Interpretivist Approaches to Human Inquiry’, in Denzin and Lincoln *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, above n 5, 119.

<sup>14</sup> Norman K Denzin, *Interpretive Interactionism* (Sage, 2001) 44.

<sup>15</sup> Hughes and Sharrock, above n 3, 97.

<sup>16</sup> Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S Lincoln, ‘Introduction: Entering the Field of Qualitative Research’ in Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S Lincoln (Eds) *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (1994), 13.

<sup>17</sup> Denzin and Lincoln, ‘Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research’, above n 2 at 12.

<sup>18</sup> Schwandt, above n 13, 119.

<sup>19</sup> Schwandt, above n 13, 118; Hughes and Sharrock, above n 3, 101.

<sup>20</sup> Schwandt, above n 13, 118.

<sup>21</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 291.

<sup>22</sup> Guba and Lincoln, ‘Epistemological and Methodological Bases of Naturalistic Inquiry’, above n 8, 237; Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 37.

the ‘knower’ and the ‘known’,<sup>23</sup> and the value of nomothetic, generalisable, context free ‘truths’,<sup>24</sup> have been deemed inadequate if we wish to understand human conduct.<sup>25</sup> Guba and Lincoln argued that features that define constructivist inquiry were better able to investigate the distinctive features of social existence.<sup>26</sup>

The ontological premises of the constructivist paradigm underpin what is sometimes perhaps misleadingly represented as a subjectivist epistemology, while the methodology or ‘process’ for conducting the inquiry is described as hermeneutic.<sup>27</sup> Ontology and epistemology are entangled in constructivist enquiry.<sup>28</sup> As Guba and Lincoln explained, epistemology is concerned with what it is possible to *know* or understand about reality while<sup>29</sup> ontology is concerned with what exists in reality to know *about*.<sup>30</sup>

The assumptions of *relativist* ontology, accordingly, will define how the epistemological question in the inquiry can be answered.<sup>31</sup> Methodologically, the hermeneutic/dialectic process then ‘takes full advantage, and account, of the observer/observed interaction to create a constructed reality that is as informed and sophisticated as it can be made at a particular point in time.’<sup>32</sup>

### **Relativist ontology, subjectivist epistemology, and hermeneutic-dialectic methodology**

The nature of reality within the constructivist paradigm is understood as multiple individual mental schema or constructions. What they are will depend on the particular person or group of people holding those constructions and the context in which they were formed.<sup>33</sup> Relativity within a constructivist paradigm seemingly denies the possibility of arriving at an absolute truth by asserting that concepts are contextually and subjectively relevant to individuals.

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<sup>23</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 37.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid 38.

<sup>25</sup> Guba and Lincoln, ‘Epistemological and Methodological Bases of Naturalistic Inquiry’, above n 8, 234

<sup>26</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* above n 8, 36; Guba and Lincoln, ‘Naturalistic and Rationalistic Enquiry’, above n 8, 141.

<sup>27</sup> Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, above n 4, 89.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid 87.

<sup>29</sup> Guba and Lincoln, ‘Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research’, above n 2, 21.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid 21.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, above n 4, 44.

<sup>33</sup> Guba and Lincoln, ‘Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research’, above n 2, 26.

A relativist ontology accepts that these constructions or interpretations of reality ‘are not more or less “true” in any absolute sense, but simply more or less informed and/or sophisticated.’<sup>34</sup> As Crotty noted:

We need to recognize that different people may well inhabit quite different worlds. Their different worlds constitute for them diverse ways of knowing, distinguishable sets of meanings, separate realities.<sup>35</sup>

A constructivist inquiry assumes that what is being found out – that is, the conceptions of the people of whom questions are being asked – is highly contextualized. What is to be known, then, is created through the interactions between the researcher and the researched as those perceptions are reconstructed or interpreted through the hermeneutic-dialectic process.<sup>36</sup> These reconstructions or interpretations are open to change and increasing sophistication,<sup>37</sup> so that the scope of the inquiry enlarges as the researcher and the participants discover more realities.<sup>38</sup> As a result, meaningfulness is bound to the time and context in which it is found.<sup>39</sup>

I have included the following figure to illustrate how relativism is understood within a constructivist paradigm.

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<sup>34</sup> Guba and Lincoln, ‘Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research’, above n 4, 111.

<sup>35</sup> Michael Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*, (Allen and Unwin, 1988) 64.

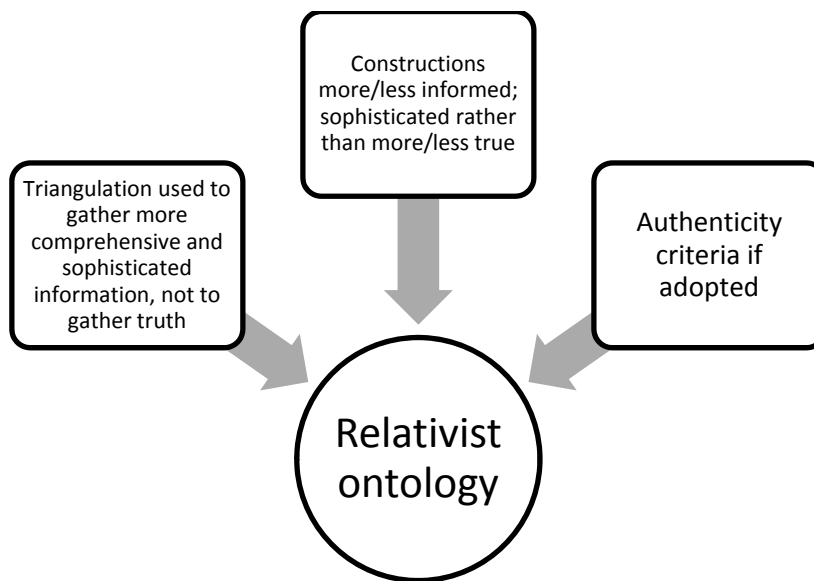
<sup>36</sup> Guba and Lincoln, ‘Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research’, above n 2, 26.

<sup>37</sup> Guba and Lincoln, ‘Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research’, above n 4, 111.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid 142.

<sup>39</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8.

Figure 4.1: Relativism and the constructivist paradigm



Methodological triangulation enables more comprehensive and sophisticated information to be gathered, while authenticity criterion, which are referred to below, guide how meaning is co-constructed and reconstructed throughout the inquiry process and in the research product.<sup>40</sup>

Therefore, while an empiricist paradigm presumes that there is an objective external reality discoverable through research, the constructivist paradigm rejects underlying theoretical assumptions of a single, foundational, knowable reality that can be divided into variable, which can be studied independently.<sup>41</sup> Reality under this paradigm is subjective, multiple,<sup>42</sup> and created<sup>43</sup> by a person based on his or her perceptions.<sup>44</sup> This entails that one person's reality is not necessarily a reality for other people. These constructions of multiple intangible realities<sup>45</sup> can only be studied holistically.<sup>46</sup> This means that they cannot be broken down into

<sup>40</sup> Kathleen Manning, 'Authenticity in Constructivist Inquiry: Methodological Considerations Without Prescription' (1997) 3 *Qualitative Inquiry* 93 .

<sup>41</sup> Guba and Lincoln, 'Epistemological and Methodological Bases of Naturalistic Inquiry', above n 8, 237; Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 37.

<sup>42</sup> Guba and Lincoln, 'Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research', above n 4 .

<sup>43</sup> Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, above n 4, 143.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid 43.

<sup>45</sup> Guba and Lincoln, 'Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research', above n 4, 110.

<sup>46</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 37.

component parts and studied independently, because each aspect is interrelated and relies on its context for meaning.’<sup>47</sup>

A constructivist approach is also transactional, that is, there is the inseparable, interactive, and ‘mutual’<sup>48</sup> relationship between the investigator, who is embedded in the research,<sup>49</sup> and the people who are the focus of the investigation. The nature of the relationship is inherently collaborative, characterised by the sharing of knowledge and mutual discovery and construction of meaning. What there is to be learned therefore is compatibly constructed by these parties through that relationship.<sup>50</sup>

This relationship is also interactive, because the actions, comments, and observations of the investigator or researcher will influence the actions of the people who are being investigated. Accordingly, a naturalistic study is both hermeneutic and dialectic.<sup>51</sup> The dialectic process is concerned with the ‘give and take’ or exchange of views while the hermeneutic process is interpretive and is about uncovering and probing the meaning of constructions.

A hermeneutic approach in social research emphasises the need to find the meaning in text:<sup>52</sup> that is, not accepting the spoken (for example, interviews) or written words or images at face value but taking account of the social and historical context of texts.<sup>53</sup> This is because language, which provides understanding and knowledge, is the means through which humans experience the world.<sup>54</sup> The purpose of the hermeneutic-dialectic process is to form a connection between the constructions of the researcher and the researched so that different views, beliefs, and assumptions can be uncovered, compared, critiqued, and analysed in search of shared or consensus constructions about how the research participants make sense of their experience.<sup>55</sup> These constructions become increasingly sophisticated through this reasoning exchange, and are expressed in the form of working hypotheses.<sup>56</sup> This kind of collaboration is only possible if there is trust between the researcher and the participants in an inquiry, which means that the values of the researcher must also be acknowledged.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Erlandson et al, above n 3, 11.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid 15.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Guba and Lincoln, ‘Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research’, above n 4, 111.

<sup>51</sup> Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, above n 4.

<sup>52</sup> Thomas R Lindlof, *Qualitative Communication Research Methods* (Sage, 1995) 31

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Crotty, above n 35.

<sup>55</sup> Lincoln and Guba ‘Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences’, above n 5, 170.

<sup>56</sup> Erlandson et al, above n 3.

<sup>57</sup> Manning, above n 40.

Lincoln and Guba conceptualised these assumptions in the form of axioms, which form the next point of discussion.

### **Axioms of constructivist inquiry**

There are five key assumptions, referred to as axioms, which underpin a constructivist inquiry. The first two relate to the nature of reality<sup>58</sup> and the relationship of the knower to the known.<sup>59</sup>

The third axiom relates to the nature of ‘truth’ statements<sup>60</sup> to counter assumptions of the empiricist paradigm.<sup>61</sup> This assumes that everything that the researcher talks about is entirely contextualised, which means that any working hypotheses are time and context bound.<sup>62</sup> The fourth axiom excluded empiricist beliefs about causality and acknowledged the intricacies and complexities of human relationships.<sup>63</sup> For example, the interrelationship of my roles as teacher and researcher was significant in my research. I already had beliefs and ideas about girls and physicality, which crystallized because of the focus of my research. As a result, I had begun to incorporate information, activities, and discussions in my own self-defence courses, which addressed concerns I had as a teacher about girls’ physicality but were also likely to influence perceptions that my own students had about these matters.

The last axiom presumes that inquiry is not value free, but rather that any inquiry is value laden. By values I mean the particular standpoints people have when they make decisions. Lincoln and Guba defined value as:

...simply that criterion, or touchstone, or perspective that one brings into play, implicitly or explicitly, in making choices or designating preferences.<sup>64</sup>

Values necessarily inform any inquiry through the investigator’s values.<sup>65</sup> These values were expressed in my research by the particular questions I was interested in,<sup>66</sup> the instruments I

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<sup>58</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 37.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid 38.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid 36.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid 38.

<sup>63</sup> Guba and Lincoln, ‘Naturalistic and Rationalistic Enquiry’, above n 8, 143.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid 161.

<sup>65</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 161; Guba and Lincoln, ‘Epistemological and Methodological Bases of Naturalistic Inquiry’, above n 8.

used to gather data, the paradigm I used to guide the research,<sup>67</sup> as well as the guiding theories for collection and analysis of data and interpreting the findings in the study.<sup>68</sup> There were also values inherent in the culture of the self-defence courses.<sup>69</sup>

The table below indicates how my study aligns with these axioms:

Table 4.1 Compliance with axioms of the constructivist paradigm

<b>Axiom 1 The nature of the reality</b>	
'Realities are multiple, constructed, and holistic'	Data collected from natural setting Multiple data sources, including participant observation
<b>Axiom 2 The relationship of knower to known</b>	
'Knower and known are interactive, inseparable'	Role of researcher as self-defence instructor- observer Discussion of emergent themes with participants Collaborative
<b>Axiom 3 The possibility of generalisation</b>	
'Only time- and context- bound working hypotheses (idiographic statement ) are possible'	Working hypotheses emerging from data collection and analysis process used to develop initial constructions specific to the research context, that became increasingly sophisticated through refinements as patterns emerged
<b>Axiom 4 The possibility of casual linkages</b>	
'All entitles are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects'	Ongoing. Interrelationship of dual roles of researcher and participant teacher
<b>Axiom 5 The role of values</b>	
'Inquiry is value-bound'	Values were integral to the study, particularly where the researcher participated as self-defence instructor

<sup>66</sup> Ibid 38.

<sup>67</sup> Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, above n 4, 102.

<sup>68</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8 38.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid 144.

## **Addressing the tensions between Constructivism and Bourdieu's reflexive sociology**

Before I go on to discuss my research design, I need to address the problem that may seem to exist between my reliance on a constructivist paradigm of inquiry and Bourdieu's framework.

The problem can be simply stated as this: on the one hand, Bourdieu offers a rich and complex relational account of human activity in the social world but neglects agency. On the other hand, social psychologists like Bandura and many constructivists and symbolic interactionists seem to rely on a one-sided account of social practice as essentially a product of social actors exercising their free will as they think or do what they want to, unconstrained by their social milieu. I will argue that the difficulty here is resolved by considering the value of Bourdieu's relational framework over any such one-sided emphasis.

There is an additional and somewhat different tension at stake in the different estimations Bourdieu and the constructivists make about the likelihood of engaging in processes designed to enable people to change significant aspects of their identity or conduct. I will argue that Bourdieu's approach accepts the capacity in people for change and that people may engage in specific processes, which are intended to encourage them to reflect on and change particular aspects of their identity. However, this does not mean that the individual can, or will, take advantage of opportunities for transformation.

I will also point out now that there is a further problem between my adapted naturalistic methodology and Bourdieu's reflexive sociology. I address that issue further in my thesis. As I have shown, constructivists argue that people as individuals are active in constructing and making sense of their experiences and that they exercise choice and judgement because they create or co-create their own realities. Bourdieu's theoretical approach, however, insists that people's constructions of their views of the world are structurally constrained because the *habitus* through which we experience the world is the product of the internalisation of structures in that world.

He described his theoretical approach as either 'constructivist structuralism' *or* of 'structuralist constructivism'.<sup>70</sup> He explained:

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<sup>70</sup> Bourdieu, 'Social Space and Symbolic Power' above n 9, 14.



By structuralism or structuralist, I mean that there exist, within the social world itself and not only within symbolic systems (languages, myths, etc.), objective structures independent of the consciousness and will of agents, which are capable of guiding and constraining their practices or their representations. By constructivism, I mean that there is a twofold social genesis, on the one hand of the schemes of perception, thought, and action which are constitutive of what I call *habitus*, and on the other hand of social structures, and particularly of what I call fields and of groups, notable those we ordinarily call social classes.<sup>71</sup>

Constructivists on this account would be open to criticism for failing to take objective structures into account. Kurki and Sinclair, for example, who were interested in constructivist inquiry in international relations, argued that constructivists ‘tend to leave the role of materially embodied social structures theoretically and empirically unexplored.’<sup>72</sup> They said that constructivists have tended to understand the concept of social structures ideationally, that is, that they have tended to see social structures consisting of intersubjective norms and rules.’<sup>73</sup> This approach, however, neglected the role of materially embodied social relations and the complexity of social structural setting of international political processes and as a result, they argued that constructivists’ understandings of the role of social forces such as patriarchy have been weak.<sup>74</sup> Jacobs and Manzi also pointed out that the ‘focus on a subjective viewpoint... downplays how both institutional rules and resources impact on individual action...[and]... overlooks the material and practical aspects of constraints that curb an individual’s capacity to affect change.’<sup>75</sup>

There is, then, an apparent tension between these two approaches. However, I argued that this can be addressed by taking into account the relational aspect of Bourdieu’s framework, which is sometimes overlooked.<sup>76</sup> Bourdieu attributed this oversight to differences in ‘cultural and scholarly traditions’.<sup>77</sup> If we are to read Bourdieu accurately, we need to understand that his structuralist constructivism belongs to a tradition of thought not always fully acknowledged, let alone emulated in the Anglo-American world. It is an approach designed to address and dissolve the old problematic binary of structure versus agency.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Milja Kurki and Adriana Sinclair, ‘Hidden in Plain Sight: Constructivist Treatment of Social Context and Its Limitations’ (2010) 47 (1) *International Politics* 1,1.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid 2.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Keith Jacobs and Tony Manzi, ‘Evaluating the Social Constructionist Paradigm in Housing Research’ (2000) 17 *Housing, Theory and Society* 35, 38.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

Bourdieu has drawn on a dialectical tradition associated conventionally with Marx. As Ollman<sup>78</sup> has argued, this dialectical tradition is reliant on a philosophy of internal relations associated variously with Epicurus, Spinoza, Leibniz, Hegel, and Marx.<sup>79</sup> The effect is to focus precisely on ‘relations’ rather than ‘things’.<sup>80</sup> According to Ollman, dialectics starts from the assumption that everything is in a continual state of change.

Marx’s dialectical method of inquiry is a way of thinking about change, how to think adequately about ‘history and systemic connections’ without misrepresenting them and ‘how to give them the attention and weight that they deserve’.<sup>81</sup> So, rather than thinking about *things*, which are static, the inquiry is interested in processes and relations.<sup>82</sup> For example, ‘capital’, ‘labor’, ‘value’, and ‘commodity form’ are not independent things that are related, but rather are better ‘grasped as relations containing in themselves, as integral elements of what they are, those part with which we tend to see them externally tied.’<sup>83</sup> Capitalism, therefore, could be analysed as a ‘system contained relationally in each of its parts.’<sup>84</sup>

Dialectical research, then, proceeds inward from the whole of a thing to the part of the thing. In Ollman’s words:

Unlike non-dialectical research, where one starts with some small part and through establishing its connections to other such parts tries to reconstruct the larger whole, dialectical research begins with the whole, the system, or as much of it as one understands, and then proceeds to an examination of the part to see where it fits and how it functions, leading eventually to a fuller understanding of the whole from which one has begun.<sup>85</sup>

Dialectical research finds and traces four types of relation, according to Ollman. The first compares the sameness of difference of the qualities of one relation with those of ‘similarly constituted relations.’<sup>86</sup> The next relation recognises that the appearance or function of a phenomenon depends on the conditioning factors that surround it, that is, the particular perspective depends on who is looking at it. For example, the function of machinery will

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<sup>78</sup> Bertell Ollman, *Dance of the Dialectic: Steps in Marx’s Method* (University of Illinois Press, 2003).

<sup>79</sup> Ibid 3,5.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid 14.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid 13.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid 14.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid 25.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid 29.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid 14.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid 15.

differ depending whether a person has been conditioned as a worker or a capitalist.<sup>87</sup> The third is the relation between two moments in a process that are differentiated by time.<sup>88</sup> The last is the relation of contradiction, which is ‘the incompatible development of different elements within the same relation, which is to say between elements that are also dependent on one another.’ Change is then attributed to the inner contradictions of the system in which change occurs.<sup>89</sup>

Bourdieu used this relational mode of thinking in order to ‘transcend’<sup>90</sup> an artificial opposition between subjective representations and objective structures.<sup>91</sup> He argued that a structuralist position of treating ‘social phenomena as things’ and a subjectivist/constructivist approach that reduced the ‘social world to the representations that agents make of it’<sup>92</sup> were polar positions. The way to transcend this dualism was to view these positions relationally so that agency and structure are not seen as interdependent factors, which are externally related but viewed as in a dialectical relationship with each other.

In other words, Bourdieu’s purpose was to understand the relational properties of phenomena. Consequently, categories, which are central to Bourdieu – such as ‘practice’ and ‘*habitus*’ – need to be treated as relations, not as things. Bourdieu argued that this was necessary for a more complete reading of practices<sup>93</sup> because this situates the inquiry ‘within the very movement of their accomplishment’ rather than an ‘inquiry into the conditions of possibility...which grasps practices from the outside’.<sup>94</sup> In his words:

...on the one hand, the objective structures that the sociologist constructs, in the objectivist moment, by setting aside the subjective representations of the agents, form the basis for these representations and constitute the structural constraints that bear upon interactions; but, on the other hand, these representations must also be taken into consideration particularly if one wants to account for the daily struggles, individual and collective, which purport to transform or to preserve these structures. This means that the two moments, the objectivist and the subjectivist, stand in a dialectical relationship (Bourdieu 1977) and that, for instance, even if the subjectivist moment seems very close, when taken separately, to interactionist or ethnomethodological analyses, it still differs radically from them: points of view are grasped as such and related to

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid 16.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid 16.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid 17, 18.

<sup>90</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *In Other Words* (Stanford University Press, 1990) 126.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid 126.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid 123-4.

<sup>93</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge University Press, 1977) 4.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid 3.

the positions they occupy in the structure of agents under consideration.<sup>95</sup>

The very nature of those relations is constitutive: that is, as Bourdieu insists, we see a two-fold relationship at work between what are all too often treated as things, namely ‘structure’ and ‘agency’. This means that just as ‘objective structures independent of the consciousness and will of agents... are capable of guiding and constraining their practices or their representations’, so too are, ‘the schemes of perception, thought, and action ... constitutive of what I call *habitus*, and on the other hand of social structures.’ It is ‘this dialectic of objectivity and subjectivity that the concept of *habitus* is designed to capture and encapsulate’.<sup>96</sup> That is, the analysis of the experiences of social agents and the objective structures which enable those experiences are integrated into the one model – *habitus*.<sup>97</sup>

Bourdieu warned that if the dialectical nature of this relationship was ignored, then the risk was that relationship would be reduced to ‘different translations of the same sentence’: that is, that either could be derived from the other.<sup>98</sup> For Bourdieu, therefore, his concept of *habitus* is a research tool, as are his concepts of field and capital.<sup>99</sup> Each present different perspectives or vantage points of ‘what is happening.’<sup>100</sup>

In my research, the use of both approaches enables a more effective exploration of women’s physical identity because a constructivist framework does not satisfactorily address the implications of the structural features of human life. A focus on a purely subjective viewpoint underplays the impact of practical, external constraints that shape action and practices, and does not explain why it is that women feel this way about themselves.

Accordingly, I use a modified constructivist frame in which I rely on Bourdieu’s model of *habitus* to uncover the relations between the objective structures and subjective experiences that are relevant to understanding the views expressed by the participants in my research. I use Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* to analyse the context in which the participants in my research formed their views of the world. Further, because ‘when individuals act, they always do so in specific social contexts or settings’, I also explore the views, actions and practices of these young women that resulted from the relation between their *habitus*es and the field of

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<sup>95</sup> Bourdieu, ‘Social Space and Symbolic Power’, above n 9, 15.

<sup>96</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, ‘Vive la Crise! For Heterodoxy in Social Science’ (1988) 17 *Theory and Society* 773, 782.

<sup>97</sup> Bourdieu, ‘Social Space and Symbolic Power’, above n 9, 14.

<sup>98</sup> Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, above n 93, 83.

<sup>99</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, ‘The Political Field, the Social Science Field, and Journalistic Field’ in Rodney Dean Benson and Érik Neveu (eds), *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field* (Polity Press, 2005) 30.

<sup>100</sup> Frederic Vandenberghe, ‘“The Real is Relational”: An Epistemological Analysis of Pierre Bourdieu’s Generative Structuralism’ (1999) 17 (1) *Sociological Theory* 32, 45.

the self-defence courses.<sup>101</sup> Thomson put it this way:

Hence particular practices or perceptions should be seen, not as the product of the *habitus* but as the product of the *relation between* the *habitus*, on the one hand, and the social contexts or ‘fields’ within which individuals act on each other.<sup>102</sup>

These can only be understood in terms of a particular position or relationship existing in a particular time and place. Bourdieu refers to this idea as social space.<sup>103</sup>

This brings me to the second problem: namely that constructivists and Bourdieu each make a different estimation about the prospects of engaging successfully in processes designed to enable people to change significant aspects of their identity or conduct. That is, there is a tension between constructivism’s assumptions that people are able to construct new realities and constructivism’s perceived failure to engage with the structural features of the social world. I rely on a constructivist frame, however, to balance criticisms of determinism in Bourdieu’s work, even though that critique may be ill-informed (according to Bourdieu) because it either misunderstands or overlooks his relational framework.<sup>104</sup> I do this because the focus of my research has to do with the possibilities of changing aspects of people’s identities and dispositions and practice. I want to explore the possibilities for women to change deeply buried aspects of their identity. I use constructivism to address this because it offers some understanding of how change can occur and where it can occur. These issues are not clearly addressed in Bourdieu’s framework.

Bourdieu accepted that *habitus* can change as it encounters novel experiences. As I discussed in the previous chapter, it is also clear, particularly in his later work, that he considered the possibility of deliberately transforming the *habitus* through specific ‘pedagogical action’,<sup>105</sup> however his theoretical approach does not sufficiently address the ‘hows’ and ‘whys’ of how change occurs. This is a different matter and I think a relevant problem. There is a basic ambiguity in his work.

As I indicated above, the tension between the two approaches also assumes that constructivism necessarily excludes social structures. However, there are writers such as

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<sup>101</sup> John B Thomson, ‘Editor’s Introduction’ in Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Polity Press, 1992) 14.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Bourdieu, ‘Social Space and Symbolic Power’ above n 9.

<sup>104</sup> Bourdieu, *In Other Words*, above n 90, 126.

<sup>105</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, ‘Scattered Remarks’ (1999) 2(3) *European Journal of Social Theory* 334, 340.

Kurki and Sinclair who have begun thinking about the possibilities of expanding constructivism's theoretical base towards the 'notion of social structures'.<sup>106</sup> Kurki and Sinclair were concerned that constructivist approaches neglect the role of materially-embodied social relations and the complexity of social structural setting of international political processes. They have suggested that by opening up the possibility of such an expansion, they also opened up the possibility that international relations constructivists could begin seriously to engage with other approaches such as historical materialism, critical theory, feminism, and continental structuralism.<sup>107</sup>

Accordingly, I rely on constructivism because this the most useful frame within which to explore the possibilities that people can change aspects of their identities.

This leads me to a problem that may appear to exist between Bourdieu's reflexive sociology and my use of the design of a naturalistic study, which I discuss below. For Bourdieu, theory and empirical research were essential partners.<sup>108</sup> He was critical of the epistemological coupling, particularly in America, of what he referred to a 'theoretical theory', that is 'academic theories conceived as simple scholastic compilation of canonical theories' and 'methodology'.<sup>109</sup> He said:

This compendium of scholastic precept (such as the requirement of preliminary definitions of concepts, which automatically produce a closure effect) and of technical recipes, whose formalism (as, for instance, in the presentation of data and results) is often closer to the logical of magic ritual than to that of a rigorous science, is the perfect counterpoint to the bastard concepts, neither concrete nor abstract, that pure theoreticians continually invent. Despite its pretense of utmost rigor, this formalism paradoxically abstracts from critical assessment the concepts used and the most fundamental operations of research such as data coding procedures and the choice of statistical techniques of analysis.<sup>110</sup>

Instead, he devised a methodological approach structured around three tools: practice, *habitus* and field. According to Grenfell, there are three guiding principles in this approach.<sup>111</sup> The first is the construction of the research object. This is where thinking relationally also comes into play. Bourdieu gave an example of a project of studying the *grandes écoles*. He

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<sup>106</sup> Kurki and Sinclair, above n 72, 20.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid 21.

<sup>108</sup> Bourdieu, 'Vive la Crise!' above n 96, 774-775.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 774.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Michael Grenfell, 'Conclusion' in Michael Grenfell (ed), *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts* (Acument, 2008) 220.

explained that while this appeared to be a manageable task, one school could not be studied independently from others because it existed in social space.<sup>112</sup> That is, in a relational way of thinking, the particular feature or difference in question is a ‘relational property existing only in and through its relations with other properties.’<sup>113</sup> It is part of this construction of the object by the researcher, which indicates which methods should be adopted.<sup>114</sup>

The second principle is a three-step approach to ‘studying the field of the object of the research’.<sup>115</sup> Bourdieu explained:

Firstly, one must analyse the position of the field vis-a-vis the field of power..... Secondly, one must map out the objective structure of the relations between the positions occupied by the agents or institutions who compete for the legitimate form of specific authority of which this field in the site. And, thirdly, one must analyze the habitus of agents<sup>116</sup>

The third principle central in Bourdieu’s reflexive sociology is participant objectivation.<sup>117</sup> As I outlined above, Bourdieu wanted to overcome an apparent theoretical antimony between objectivism and subjectivism. He said that ‘[o]n the one hand, sociology can ...“treat social facts and things”...[and o]n the other hand , sociology can reduce the social world to the mere representations that agents have of it’<sup>118</sup> This ‘represents the quintessential expression of “fuzzy-wuzzy” sociology’<sup>119</sup> and is the position associated with naturalistic methods such as participant observation, which I employed in my research. He deplored the *indiscriminate* reflexivity of participant observation and emphasised participant objectivation to overcome an opposition between ‘objective observation’ and ‘subjective participation’<sup>120</sup> saying:

A social reality, whether an agent or an institution, presents itself all the more easily, provides all the more readily what are called “data” the more completely we agree to take it as it presents itself.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre, Jean-Claude Chamboredon, and Jean-Claude Passeron, *The Craft of Sociology: Epistemological Preliminaries* (Walter de Gruyter, 1991) 253

<sup>113</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*, (Stanford University Press, 1994) 6

<sup>114</sup> Elizabeth B Silva, and Rosalind Edwards, ‘Operationalizing Bourdieu on Capitals: A Discussion on ‘The Construction of the Object’ (Economic and social Research Council Research Methods Programme Working Paper No. 7, The University of Manchester)

<sup>115</sup> Grenfell, above n 111, 220

<sup>116</sup> Wacquant, ‘Towards a Reflexive Sociology’, above n 1, 40

<sup>117</sup> Grenfell, above n 111, 220, 225

<sup>118</sup> Bourdieu, ‘Vive la Crise!’ above n 96, 781

<sup>119</sup> Ibid 781

<sup>120</sup> Ibid 784

<sup>121</sup> Ibid 776

Participant objectivation aimed at objectivizing the subjective relation to the object.<sup>122</sup> Above all, Bourdieu insisted on a reflexive sociology: that is, he emphasised the need for the researcher to be critical about his or her own practice and position. He emphasised reflexivity to address biases introduced by the research into the construction of the research object. In particular, he suggested that researcher think about why they use particular research tools.

For Bourdieu, theoretical concepts are also ‘polymorphic, supple and adaptive, rather than defined calibrated and used rigidly’.<sup>123</sup> This is illustrated in the comment which opened this chapter. Bourdieu emphasised ‘methodological polytheism’<sup>124</sup> because ‘the researcher needs to obtain the best data analysis to undertake the construction of a relational analysis both within and between fields.’<sup>125</sup> But, he also warned against an epistemological *laissez-faire* and emphasised the vigilance, which must be accorded to ensuring that the analytic techniques used fit the problem under investigation.<sup>126</sup>

After due consideration, and wary of Bourdieu’s abjuration of methodological prescription,<sup>127</sup> as well as his dislike of ‘diary disease’,<sup>128</sup> I decided that a naturalistic study was the best design to explore my research questions, particularly because of the complexity of my own role as the designer and instructor of one of the pedagogic practices that are at the heart of my project.

I will now outline the entry conditions for a naturalistic study according to Lincoln and Guba.

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<sup>122</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, ‘Participant Objectivation’ (2003) 9(2) *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 281, 283

<sup>123</sup> Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* above n 1, 23

<sup>124</sup> Loïc Wacquant, ‘Pierre Bourdieu’ in Rob Stones (ed), *Key Contemporary Thinkers* (Macmillan, 1998) 266

<sup>125</sup> Grenfell, above n 111, 224

<sup>126</sup> Wacquant, ‘Towards a Reflexive Sociology’, above n 1, 54

<sup>127</sup> Ibid

<sup>128</sup> ‘Bourdieu, ‘Participant Objectivation’ above n 122, 282



## Research design: a naturalistic study

Guba and Lincoln described four entry conditions for conducting a naturalistic study, which I discuss below. First, constructivist research must be conducted in natural settings, that is, the time and context of the phenomenon being studied.<sup>129</sup> Secondly, constructivist inquiry also recognises the value of the investigator and other humans as instruments of choice<sup>130</sup> for data collection.<sup>131</sup> Indeed, Guba and Lincoln consider the human as the only possible choice in the early stages of an inquiry<sup>132</sup> when, typically, constructivists begin inquiry without preconceptions of what is to be known, and what questions to ask. Third, naturalistic/constructivist investigators are disposed towards qualitative methods such as interviewing and observation, although quantitative methods used appropriately are not excluded.<sup>133</sup> The last entry condition is tacit knowledge, which is the indefinable<sup>134</sup> knowledge gained through experience. It is regarded as the base for new understandings.<sup>135</sup>

I discuss how my research complies with these entry conditions table below beginning with a brief outline in the table below.

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<sup>129</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8; Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, above n 4, 175.

<sup>130</sup> Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, above n 4.

<sup>131</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 39; Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, above n 4, 102.

<sup>132</sup> Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, above n 4, 175

<sup>133</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* above n 8, 98-99; S. Lincoln and Guba 'Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences', above n 5; Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, above n 4, 176.

<sup>134</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 195.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid 198.

Table 4. 2 Compliance with entry conditions for a naturalistic study

Entry condition	Compliance in this study
Natural setting	Self-defence courses delivered in two secondary girls' schools
Human as instrument of choice	Human participants and researcher as participant observer
Qualitative methods of data collection	Focus groups, interviews, observation, participant observation
Tacit knowledge	Previous experience as a self-defence instructor but also as novice female self-defence student

## The natural setting

My research took place in the natural setting of two self-defence courses delivered to girls attending two different secondary girls' schools. Both schools offered self-defence training as a compulsory unit in a particular year level in each school's physical education curriculum. I taught one course at School A; and Paul, a young, male instructor at the local branch of a well-known Tae-Kwondo school, taught self-defence at the second school – School B. However, before I go on to discuss this entry condition, I will explain my reasons for setting the inquiry in two different self-defence courses.

One of the key questions in my research regards whether the particular pedagogic practice of self-defence could be put into place to enable women to transform aspects of their identity that relate to a *habitus* of vulnerability and disempowerment.

I wanted to explore this question in the natural setting of a women's self-defence course. However, this immediately raised questions about what kind of self- defence course would be appropriate. This was a complex issue because self-defence training courses for women vary

widely<sup>136</sup> and unlike many other organised physical activities such as sports, there are no standardized ‘rules of the game’.

This deficiency resulted in several concerns. First, there are no guidelines to help determine the appropriate length of a self-defence training course for women. Courses might be two hours or twenty hours, depending on the time or money allocated by an organizing body,<sup>137</sup> the availability of a training venue, or even the creativity, knowledge, and planning of the self-defence instructor. This has a flow-on effect to the kinds of that can be demonstrated by instructors and practiced by the participants, as well as the intensity of the instructors’ supervision.

Secondly, the content of individual self-defence training courses is often different and will generally tend to reflect different martial arts styles. For example, it is likely that instructors with grappling backgrounds in judo or ju-jitsu will have a stronger focus on grappling and submission techniques, while kicking and striking styles such as karate and taekwondo will emphasis leg power and ‘soft’ target points for striking such as the throat and groin.

Third, instructors might teach certain skills but these are not necessarily useful or worthwhile skills for self-defence. As Madden and Sokol point out:

...[n]ot all self-defense programs teach effective techniques. Instructors whose training has been in traditional martial arts directed towards men and sport often fail to consider the short-term nature of self-defense training and women’s physiques.<sup>138</sup>

Finally, the objectives of instructors and self-defence schools are often not open to scrutiny. For example, the combat or martial arts industry in Victoria has been deregulated.<sup>139</sup> Instructors are encouraged to apply for accreditation under a National Martial Arts Instructor Accreditation Scheme, but accreditation is neither mandatory nor enforceable. As a result, nationally accredited instructors teach some self-defence training courses but anyone who chooses to describe himself or herself as a self-defence instructor might teach others.

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<sup>136</sup> Nina Cummings, ‘Self-Defense Training For College Women’ (1992) 40 *Journal of American College Health*.

<sup>137</sup> Both schools involved in this study stipulated the length of each course.

<sup>138</sup> Margaret E Madden and Thomas J Sokol, ‘Teaching Women Self-Defense: Pedagogical Issues’ (1997) 11(2) *Feminist Teacher* 133, 136.

<sup>139</sup> Victoria, *Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 12 September, 1996, 217 (Mr Reynolds, Minister for Sport)

The only reason I obtained an instructor's licence card when I first began teaching self-defence was that it was too difficult at the time to obtain insurance without one. First aid training was the only requirement I needed to fulfill in order to secure a card. I certainly did not need a card or a licence to find work as an instructor, nor did any organisation ever ask about my 'self-defence' credentials. Further, even when instructors are accredited, an Instructor's Code only requires instructors to provide a 'planned and sequential' training program and 'safe environment'.<sup>140</sup> There are no other national or state controls over the kinds of activities or skills that could be included in self defence training.

The result is that there is no standardized content for self-defence training, nor is there any form of quality control. A number of self-defence programs have been specifically set up and structured around women's needs, such as the American based Model Mugging<sup>141</sup> and Rape Aggression Defence Systems courses.<sup>142</sup> While these courses have developed curricula, there is no conclusive research about what features of self-defence training are most appropriate for women, such as how the training should be structured or the period of time in which training should take place.

Consequently, when I began teaching self-defence classes to women after ten years practicing karate, I constructed my own framework based on my martial arts experience. I thought I had a particular understanding of what women should know about self-defence after my own experiences with competing with men and stronger bodies in the dojo. Later, when I commenced this project, I decided to design my research around my own ideas of what a self-defence course for women should look like. On reflection, however, I realised that what *I* considered to be appropriate for women to learn might not necessarily be best practice.

A further issue was that the kinds of things I could teach women about self-defence were inherently limited by what I knew about self-defence, which based on one particular martial art. These concerns pointed to a need for me to modify my research design to include a self-defence course taught by a different instructor, who would have different pedagogical approaches. Consequently, I expanded the design to include a self-defence training course delivered at a different school by an instructor with a different martial arts background. I did not increase the number of schools primarily because very few schools offered self-defence

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<sup>140</sup> Martial Arts Industry Association at <http://www.maia.com.au/pages/instructor.htm>

<sup>141</sup> Model Mugging Self-Defense, <http://modelmugging.org/>

<sup>142</sup> RAD Systems: Rape Aggression Defense: The National Standard in Self Defense Education, <http://www.rad-systems.com/>.

training courses to girls at the time I gathered my data. A third school , which offered self-defence training delivered by two different instructors also refused my request to gather data at that location as other research projects had priority.

I collected data over a two-year period from self-defence courses offered at two secondary Catholic girls' schools, School A and School B following the grant of permission to conduct the study from the Catholic Education Office and the respective School Principals. The common religious background of the two schools was chance rather than design. Both schools are located similar distances from the central business district in solidly middle class suburbs.

I taught the course at School A to approximately 100, year 10 students (15- 16 years) in four classes over a five-week period. The participants at School B were year 9 (14-15 years) students. Approximately 225 year 9 students (14-15 years) divided into 9 classes participated in self-defence training at School B. Each class had four lessons spread over five weeks.

Table 4.3 Structure of the two self-defence courses

	No. of classes	No. of students participating in self-defence course	No. of lessons
School A	4	Approx. 100	5 lessons per class over 5 weeks
School B	9	Approx. 225	4 lessons per class over 5 weeks

## The human as instrument of choice and tacit knowledge

Lincoln and Guba argued that 'only the human instrument is capable of grasping and evaluating the meaning of' differential interaction 'with respondents and objects'.<sup>143</sup> The so-called human instrument uses tacit or intuitive knowledge explicitly and legitimately as the base of many of the working hypotheses that will develop.<sup>144</sup> Tacit knowledge is intuitive

<sup>143</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 39.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid* 198.

knowledge or an understanding that cannot be described but is just something that one “knows”.<sup>145</sup> Lincoln and Guba insisted that,

...given the indeterminate initial form of inquiry pursued naturalistically, it is essential that then human instrument *be* permitted to use his or her tacit knowledge at full strength and in most explicit fashion. Anything else simply dulls the instrument and reduces the value of the inquiry<sup>146</sup>

As I indicated at the beginning of my thesis, a momentary, transformative experience prompted me to begin my research. Despite several years training in martial arts, my own self-portrait emphasised all of the features of a weak, hesitant, scared, and physically incapable woman. Then, for an all too short period, I became strong, unflinching, capable, and fearless while I was playing the role of a male attacker. I have tacit knowledge of that physically disempowered woman, and of being a woman. I also have tacit knowledge of what kinds of changes to those aspects of identity might be possible although it is difficult to put that knowledge into words. I also ‘knew’ what it was like to be a female self-defence student and the experiences that prompted me to train in martial arts in the first place. This tacit knowledge was also embedded in the self-defence course I designed.

I also had tacit knowledge of both schools in different ways. I had previously taught self-defence in both schools but I also had other experiences. For example, I was an ‘old girl’ at School A and I had sometimes taught self-defence at that school to the daughters of my peers. The environment was also sometimes overwhelmingly familiar, full of ‘ghosts from the past’. My most vivid experience of being scared and feeling physically inept occurred many years ago in the hall where I later taught self-defence, when a physical education teacher publicly chided me for baulking at a vaulting horse. I also ‘knew’ School B because this school was local in my area.

The third entry condition for a naturalistic study is the use of qualitative methods of data collection. This is because qualitative methods of data collection ‘come more easily to the human-as-instrument’.<sup>147</sup> I outline these methods next. I draw attention to those aspects of the data collection, which I relied on to establish something of the *habitus* of the girls in my research.

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid 195.

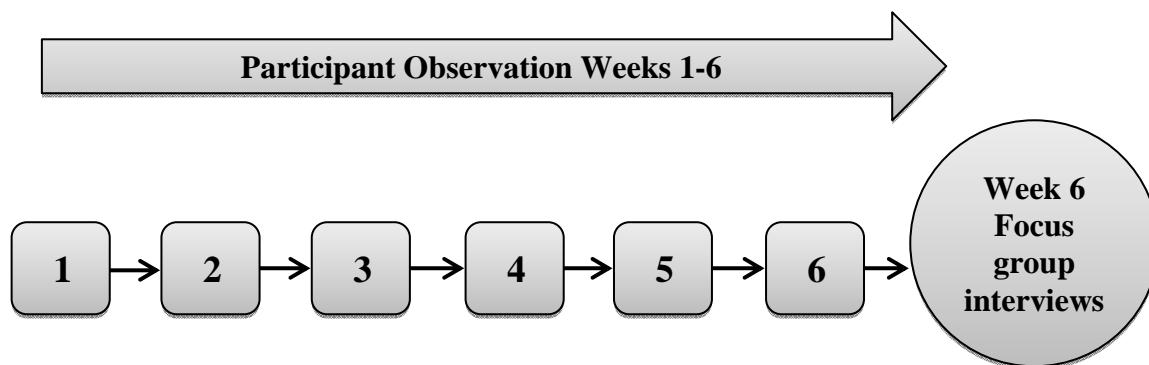
<sup>146</sup> Ibid 198.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid 198.

## Qualitative methods of data collection

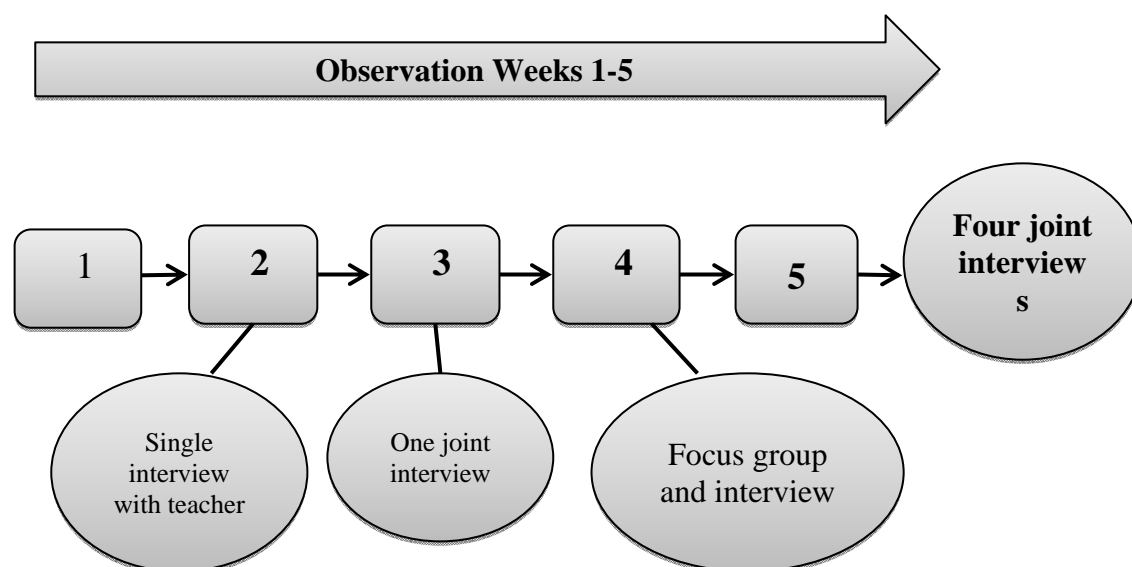
I used interviewing, focus group interviewing, observation and participant observation as methods of data collection. At School A, I observed as a participant-teacher in the self-defence training course, which was delivered to Year 10 students. The year level was divided into four groups. Each group had five lessons in self-defence over a six-week period. I facilitated two focus groups at the conclusion of the course. This process is indicated in the diagram below.

Figure 4.2 Process of observation and interviewing at School A



I subsequently negotiated entry two years later at School B where I observed a self-defence course taught to Year 9 students by another instructor over 5 weeks. I began interviewing students in the second week and concluded in the last week. The process is indicated in the diagram below.

Figure 4.3 Process of observation and interviewing at School B



## Focus groups

I facilitated three focus groups in total. I formed two large groups of nine members each at School A, and a smaller group of four at School B. I used focus groups because this method is characterised by the use of group interaction,<sup>148</sup> and because they could be constructed around existing classroom relationships.<sup>149</sup> It was also a more suitable method for the students and the schools as the groups minimised any inconvenience and disruption to classes, which might have occurred had I scheduled several individual interviews during the school day. I benefited from my existing relationship as the self-defence instructor at School A, because the students had become used to interacting with me on a regular basis in class.<sup>150</sup> All members of these focus groups were fellow students. While group participants do not need to be acquainted, they are usually selected on the basis of common attributes,

<sup>148</sup> David L Morgan, *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research* (Sage, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, 1997) 2; Jenny Kitzinger and R S Barbour, 'Introduction The Challenge and Promise of Focus Groups' in R S Barbour and J Kitzinger J (eds) *Developing Focus Group Research : Politics, Theory and Practice* (Sage,1999) 1,10; Clare E Wilkinson, Charlotte E Rees and Lynn V Knight, ' "From the Heart of My Bottom": Negotiating Humor in Focus Group Discussions' (2007) 17 *Qualitative Health Research* 41; Lindlof, above n 52.

<sup>149</sup> Julius Sim, 'Collecting and Analysing Qualitative Data: Issues Raised by the Focus Group' (1998) 2 *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 345, 346; Jenny Kitzinger, 'The Methodology of Focus Groups: The Importance of Interaction between Research Participants' (1994) 16 *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 103, 112.

<sup>150</sup> Bruce L Berg, 'Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences' (Pearson, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed, 2004) 133; Donna Eder and Laura Fingerson, 'Interviewing Children and Adolescents' in James A. Holstein and Jaber F Gubrium, *Inside Interviewing: New Lenses, New Concerns* (Sage, 2003) 33, 40-41.



demographics or experiences.<sup>151</sup> The first focus group at School A, in particular, was formed from one social group, which resulted in free flowing discussion with minimal guidance.<sup>152</sup>

The commonalities between the groups in this study and the informality of the structure also enabled a deeper and freer discussion of the issues on a level playing field.<sup>153</sup> The group format also minimised the potential effect of a hierarchical relationship of teacher and students at School A.

I convened both groups at School A for approximately 80 minutes or over the equivalent two class periods. I used a list of general areas related to my research questions to guide the conversation. I used the same interview guide for both groups but I changed the order and priority of questions changed according to how the conversation was moving.

The first focus group at School A was drawn from one class and constructed around an existing social cluster, which was very useful for conversation. The second focus group was not formed around an obviously pre-existing social group. While all the students were in the same class, this group appeared to be made up of smaller groups of friends based on my observation in the lessons.

I was aware that the value of focus groups can sometimes be limited by group dynamics where some members of the group conform with the more dominant voices rather than express their own opinion.<sup>154</sup> For example, some people might be intimidated by others in the group, feel that their own perspective has no value, or not wish to disclose their own opinion if this is inconsistent with the collective voice.<sup>155</sup> Other members of the group might feel there is no point to offering their own opinions when others in the group have already addressed the topic, or if they feel they are less able to express themselves.<sup>156</sup> Likewise, some may feel also obliged to express culturally appropriate opinions.<sup>157</sup> Pre-existing social groups

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<sup>151</sup> Lindlof, above n 52, 174; Pranee Liamputtong and Douglas Ezzy, *Qualitative Research Methods* (Oxford University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, 2005)77; Prudence Plummer-D'Amato, 'Focus Group Methodology: Part 1: Considerations for Design' (2008) 15 *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation* 69, 70.

<sup>152</sup> Sim, above n 149, 348.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Colin MacDougall and Frances Baum, 'The Devil's Advocate: A Strategy to Avoid Groupthink and Stimulate Discussion in Focus Groups' (1997) 7 *Qualitative Health Research* 532, 533; Martha Ann Carey and M W Smith, 'Capturing the Group Effect in Focus Groups' A Special Concern in Analysis' (1994) 4 *Qualitative Health Research* 123, 124; Liamputtong and Ezzy, above n 151, 97.

<sup>155</sup> Berg, above n 150, 137.

<sup>156</sup> Sim, above n 149, 348.

<sup>157</sup> Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (Oxford University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, 2004), 360.

may also have already established hierarchies that result in lesser members of the group wanting to please the leader by agreeing with his or her comments.<sup>158</sup>

However, the students appeared at ease in each other's company, as well as in mine. While there were more dominant voices, these appeared to be more representative of the girls' own conversational styles rather than their status within the group. In other words, some girls were just more 'chatty' and had more to say about particular issues. Both groups may have felt comfortable in my presence because of the temporary intimacy, which arises in the course of self-defence instruction.

Similarly, the focus group at School B was not formed around a pre-established friendship group – although the girls were in the same class. The girls in this group did not share the same kind of connection with each other that had been apparent at the other school. Although conversation would have flowed more easily within a network of friends, there was no indication that the girls felt uncomfortable talking about the issues raised for discussion amongst one another. I had minimal interaction with these students prior to interviewing and I was an outsider even though the students soon became accustomed to my almost daily presence in their self-defence classes. This session lacked the early rapport established at School A but was less likely to be affected by the same kinds of issues around hierarchy that existed at School A where I was also the self-defence teacher. The group was convened for approximately 45 minutes or one class period in an empty classroom. I used the same interview guide that I used for the joint interviews, which was itself a refinement of the interview guide adopted at School A. It had been clear after early analysis of data I collected at School A that I needed to investigate questions around physical identity in more depth.<sup>159</sup> These questions were followed by questions around the girls' perceptions of self-defence, and their own self-defence abilities, and the self-defence course.

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<sup>158</sup> Kitzinger, 'The Methodology of Focus Groups' above n 149, 110; Jenny Kitzinger, 'Qualitative Research: Introducing Focus Groups' (1995) 311 *British Medical Journal* 299, 300; MacDougall and Baum, above n 154 533-534.

<sup>159</sup> Plummer D'Amato, above, n 151, 72.

## Interviews

I used semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions,<sup>160</sup> which is consistent with the requirements of a naturalistic study.<sup>161</sup> I drew up a list of core questions as a guide although I changed the order of questions and added others depending on the direction of the discussion in the particular interview.<sup>162</sup> In naturalistic studies, an interview is regarded more as an interactive conversation, albeit with a purpose that has been dictated by the researcher,<sup>163</sup> rather than a simple question and answer conversation.<sup>164</sup> These active interactions between two or several people lead to the negotiated understandings that are later reconstructed by the researcher.<sup>165</sup>

I decided to use interview for several reasons. First, while it had been clear from the focus groups at School A that, while the group context was useful in encouraging a more open discussion about the issues, I needed to spend more time with individual girls to get a more detailed response to the questions I was asking. There is also more scope in an interview to question individual participants about their own perceptions,<sup>166</sup> which would enhance the likelihood that the girls would offer a personal voice rather than a collective voice. Denzin has argued that meaning is created and performed in an interview, transforming information into a shared experience.<sup>167</sup> Words matter<sup>168</sup> but language matters too: *how* people articulate their stories<sup>169</sup> is part of the contextual meaning of interviews.<sup>170</sup>

Similarly with focus groups, joint interviewing opens up the possibility of co-constructed meaning between the participants<sup>171</sup> and particularly, as Currie *et al* have suggested, ‘girls’

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<sup>160</sup> Bruce A Chadwick, Howard M Bahr, and Stan L Albrecht, *Social Science Research Methods* (Prentice, 1984) 118-119

<sup>161</sup> Erlandson et al, above n 3, 86. See however Liamputtong and Ezzy, above n 151, 56: Liamputtong and Ezzy objected to these labels because of the inference that these forms of qualitative interview are a ‘watered down version of structured interviews’.

<sup>162</sup> Sotirios S Sarantakos, *Social Research* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. 1998) 179, 182.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid 164.

<sup>164</sup> Erlandson et al, above n 3, 85-86.

<sup>165</sup> Andrea Fontana and James H Frey, ‘The Interview: From Structured Questions to Negotiated Text’ in Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S Lincoln (eds), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials* (Sage, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, 2003) 62, 90-91.

<sup>166</sup> Lindlof, above n 52 167.

<sup>167</sup> Norman K Denzin, ‘The Reflexive Interview and a Performative Social Science’ (2001) 1 *Qualitative Research* 23, 24, 25.

<sup>168</sup> *ibid*, 24.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid* 25.

<sup>170</sup> *ibid* 24, 25.

<sup>171</sup> Sara M Morris, ‘Joint and Individual Interviewing in the Context of Cancer’ (2001) 11 *Qualitative Health Research* 553, 558.

talk has the potential to give us access to their world.’<sup>172</sup> However, as I also found in the focus groups, some participants prefer remain relatively invisible<sup>173</sup> or they may have difficulties expressing themselves, because of shyness or because they are not able remember much about the particular issue being discussed, or have not thought enough about the issue to express their views on the subject.<sup>174</sup> While these participants may be able to hide in the larger group, the context of interviews can create an expectation that the participant should respond.<sup>175</sup> I discuss this issue further in this chapter.

I interviewed students in five joint interviews and one single interview at School B as well as one single interview with Robert,<sup>176</sup> the physical education coordinator. The girls’ participation in the interviews and the focus group was based on the return rate of the consent forms, which the students handed to their teachers. I did not plan specifically for joint interviews,<sup>177</sup> which were an exigency of the school timetable,<sup>178</sup> because I was usually only notified of the girls’ availability for interviews on the day they took place. The result was beneficial because the girls were more comfortable with their friends and classmates.<sup>179</sup>

Questions emerged naturally over the course of the interviews<sup>180</sup> and I checked these off as the interviews progressed.<sup>181</sup> On occasion, I asked questions that were not in the interview guide, in response to information shared by the girls.<sup>182</sup> I recorded all interviews and focus group interviews, which were later transcribed. The names of all of the participants have been replaced with pseudonyms.

## Observation and Participant Observation

I used two forms of observation in my research. I observed as a participant at School A in my role of self-defence instructor, and therefore became part of the phenomenon I was

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<sup>172</sup> Dawn H Currie, Dierdre M Kelly, and Shauna Pomerantz, ‘Listening to Girls: Discursive Positioning and the Construction of Self’ (2007) 20 *International Journal to Qualitative Studies in Education* 377, 377.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Lindlof, above n 52, 179.

<sup>175</sup> Karen Nairn, Jenny Munro and Anne B. Smith, ‘A Counter-Narrative of a ‘Failed’ Interview’ (2005) 5 *Qualitative Research* 221

<sup>176</sup> All of the research participants have been given pseudonyms.

<sup>177</sup> Morris, above n 171, 565.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid 565.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Erlandson et al, above n 3, 88.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid 90.

<sup>182</sup> Sarantakos, above n 162, 182.

researching,<sup>183</sup> while at School B, I observed a self-defence course conducted by another instructor. Observation takes place at the 'scene of the action',<sup>184</sup> and the strength of this technique is the requirement that the researcher becomes familiar with the participants within the inquiry regardless whether he or she participates or not in the scene.<sup>185</sup>

I recorded my observations as they were experienced at School B in a detailed journal. An example of observation at School B is provided in the Appendix. Although observations are best recorded as they occur because of the distorting effect of time on memories<sup>186</sup> this was not possible at School A because of my active participation, so I recorded observations and informal conversations at the first available opportunity.

I chose to participate as an observer at School A so that I could observe the communications and interactions between the students, and between the students and myself, in a natural manner,<sup>187</sup> and at the time that they occurred.<sup>188</sup> Participant observation is characterised by its flexible design and<sup>189</sup> participant observers aim to understand the lives of the actors in a study by 'stepping into the field',<sup>190</sup> and participating in the natural setting of the group of people who are being observed.<sup>191</sup> This places participant observation within an interpretivist/constructivist paradigm. The focus of the observation usually includes things like the physical and social setting, such as the school environment the behaviour of the people in the setting, and what they say, as well as the interactions between them.<sup>192</sup>

In my research, participant observation enabled a close exploration of gendered *habitus* in the context of the self-defence course. I was in the 'middle of the action' as the self defence instructor, and well-positioned to observe some of the ways in which women embody their

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<sup>183</sup> Piergiorgio Corbetta, *Social Research: Theory, Methods and Techniques* (Sage 2003) 236; Stephen J Ball, 'Participant Observation' in John P Keeves (ed) , *Educational Research, Methodology, and Measurement: An International Handbook* (Pergamon Press,1988) 507,509.

<sup>184</sup> Earl Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research* (Wadsworth Publishing Company, 8<sup>th</sup> Ed, 1998) 286.

<sup>185</sup> Allan Kellehear, *The Unobtrusive Researcher- A Guide to Methods* (Allen and Unwin, 1993) 125.

<sup>186</sup> Joe Nandhakumar and Matthew R Jones, 'Development Gain? Participant Observation in Interpretive Management Information Systems Research' (2002) 2 *Qualitative Research* 323, 333.

<sup>187</sup> Sarantakos, above n 162, 231.

<sup>188</sup> Chadwick, Bahr and Albrecht, above n 160, 74; Sarantakos, above n 162, 232

<sup>189</sup> Sarantakos, above n 162, 231; Uwe Flick, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (Sage, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, 2002), 139; Barbara Paterson, Joan Bottorff, and Roberta Hewatt, 'Blending Observational Methods: Possibilities, Strategies, and Challenges' (2003) 2(1) *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 1,3.

<sup>190</sup> Sarantakos, above n 162, 236.

<sup>191</sup> Howard S Becker, 'Problems of Inference, and Proof in Participant Observation', in Dennis P. Forcese and Stephen Richer (eds), *Stages of Social Research: Contemporary Perspectives* (Prentice Hall, 1970) 205; Severyn Ten Bruyn, *The Human Perspective in Sociology: The Methodology of Participant Observation*, (Prentice Hall, 1966) 12; Ball, above n 183, 507; Guba and Lincoln, *Effective Evaluation* , above n 8, 193; Sarantakos, above n 162, 232.

<sup>192</sup> Corbetta, above n 183, 246; Chadwick, Bahr and Albrecht, above n 160, 81.

identities in context of self defence training. This method is compatible with the characteristics of a naturalistic study because while the participant-observer begins with a general idea of a problem or issue that requires exploration, the focus of the study is determined by the social phenomenon under observation.<sup>193</sup> In my research, the data I collected through the focus group discussion was guided by ongoing analysis of the data I obtained through observation<sup>194</sup> because observation and analysis occur sequentially in a naturalistic study.<sup>195</sup> I discuss the analysis process later in this chapter.

Occasionally, I found it difficult at School A to keep a balance between my active role as an instructor and my researcher role<sup>196</sup> because, as an active participant observer, I was ‘tied to ‘work in my participant role’.<sup>197</sup> I was also deeply concerned about the safety of students, given the physical risks involved in learning self-defence. I overcame this by designing observation into the structure of the self-defence course, including many opportunities to work one-on-one with the girls. However, I had also certain opinions and attitudes about self-defence because of my previous teaching experiences, which influenced the types of things that I wanted to teach at School A. I addressed the potential for bias by triangulating observation with other focus groups and interviewing, which also provided me with an opportunity to obtain more sophisticated constructions.

There are other key elements of constructivist inquiry,<sup>198</sup> which include inductive analysis of the data,<sup>199</sup> and the development of theory arising from the data.<sup>200</sup> The design is described as emergent because methodological steps taken by the researcher are based on the preceding steps.<sup>201</sup> The research findings are used to develop propositions from fieldwork, which are then iteratively tested in the field. These elements are discussed below.

Next, I will outline my data analysis process.

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<sup>193</sup> Ball, above n 183, 507-508.

<sup>194</sup> Becker, above n 191, 206.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Raymond L Gold, ‘Roles in Sociological Field Observation’ (1958) 36 *Social Forces* 217, 219.

<sup>197</sup> Ann MacPhail, ‘Athlete and Researcher: Undertaking and Pursuing an Ethnographic Study in a Sports Club’ (2004) 4 *Qualitative Research* 227, 234; Leonard Schatzman and Anselm L Strauss, *Field Research: Strategies for a Natural Sociology* (Prentice Hall, 1973), 6.

<sup>198</sup> Guba and Lincoln emphasised fourteen characteristics of a naturalistic inquiry

<sup>199</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 40.

<sup>200</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8; Barney G Glaser, *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis* (Sociology Press, 1992).

<sup>201</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 41.

## Inductive data analysis: constant comparative method

I manually coded and analysed data collected from two focus groups from School A, one focus group, five joint interviews, and two single interviews from School B, as well as my journal notes. I adopted the constant comparative method of analysis using a synthesis of approaches, which I describe below. A naturalistic study requires theory to emerge from or be grounded in the data<sup>202</sup> rather than preceding the data<sup>203</sup> in the form of an *a priori* theory.<sup>204</sup> The researcher identifies themes emerging from the raw data that are described as grounded theory through ongoing inductive analysis. This means that data is analysed during, and after, data collection. Induction is the technique used to move from ‘raw units of information’ to categories of information, which enable the formation of working hypotheses.<sup>205</sup>

A naturalistic study also requires theory to emerge from or be grounded in the data<sup>206</sup> rather than preceding the data<sup>207</sup> in the form of an *a priori* theory.<sup>208</sup> The researcher identifies themes emerging from the raw data that are described as grounded theory through ongoing inductive analysis. Grounded theory is a ‘necessary consequence’ of the paradigmatic assumptions of multiple realities<sup>209</sup> because pre-existing theories could not take account of the many variables. Theory that is grounded in the data is ‘absolutely essential to the concept of emergent design described above.’<sup>210</sup>

I began analysis early because of my adoption of a grounded theory approach.<sup>211</sup> I analysed data gathered through initial purposive sampling at School A and the early emerging theory indicated where I should look for future data collection.<sup>212</sup> In this way, data collection and data analysis were interrelated.<sup>213</sup> This kind of approach is also iterative because the analysis of this initial data informed the next stage of data collection.<sup>214</sup> I continued this process of

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<sup>202</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 41; Bryman, above n 157, 401.

<sup>203</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 204.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid 205.

<sup>205</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 20; Nigel Gilbert (ed) *Researching Social Life* (Sage, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, 2001), 14, 19.

<sup>206</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 41; Bryman, above n 157, 401.

<sup>207</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 204.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid 205.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid 28.

<sup>211</sup> Erlandson et al, above n 3, 111.

<sup>212</sup> Barney G Glaser and Anselm L Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Aldine Publishing, 1967), 40.

<sup>213</sup> Douglas Ezzy, *Qualitative Analysis: Practice and Innovation* (Allen and Unwin, 2002) 62.

<sup>214</sup> Bryman, above n 157, 399.

analysis<sup>215</sup> until it was clear that the point of theoretical saturation had been reached and no new data was emerging.<sup>216</sup>

## **Constant comparative method of analysis**

Constant comparison<sup>217</sup> is an inductive<sup>218</sup> analytic method for generating theory that is grounded in the data. The constant comparative method is the process of organising data into temporary categories<sup>219</sup> based on characteristics that appear to be similar.<sup>220</sup> Decisions ('rules') about what to include or exclude from the category are provisionally recorded<sup>221</sup> and eventually finalised. Glaser and Strauss explained the rule in four stages,<sup>222</sup> which were subsequently refined by Lincoln and Guba to suit the requirements of their formulation of a naturalistic study.<sup>223</sup> These stages involve (1) a comparison of incidents that are applicable to each category; (2) integration of the categories and their respective properties; (3) delimiting the theory, and (4) writing up the findings.<sup>224</sup>

The first stage requires coding the data into as many categories of analysis as possible by comparing one coded incident with another so the first practical issue was deciding how physically to approach that process. Initially, I intended to use Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) (in particular, NVivo) to facilitate this process, as the data comprised transcripts of the interviews and focus groups as well as the observation journal. These were all formatted as Word documents and accessible electronically. The benefits of CAQDAS include electronic mapping of relationships between codes and

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<sup>215</sup> Sarantakos above n 162, 273.

<sup>216</sup> Glaser and Strauss, above n 212, 61;

<sup>217</sup> Glaser and Strauss, above n 212, 102; Erlandson et al, above n 3, 112; Bryman, above n 157., 403.

<sup>218</sup> Glaser and Strauss, above n 212, 114.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid 105.

<sup>220</sup> Lincoln and Guba, Naturalistic Inquiry, above n 8, 203.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid 203- 204.

<sup>222</sup> Glaser and Strauss, above n 212, 105.

<sup>223</sup> Lincoln and Guba, Naturalistic Inquiry, above n 8, 344- 350. These were later refined again by Erlandson *et al*, above n 3. Erlandson *et al* include negative case analysis as a stage however Lincoln and Guba prefer this as a mode of satisfying trustworthiness.

<sup>224</sup> Glaser and Strauss, above n 212, 105.



selective retrieval of different sections of information.<sup>225</sup> Software programs provide an efficient form of storage, record keeping and enable speedy access to data<sup>226</sup> and, as Seale points out, using qualitative software can help demonstrate rigor of the research process.<sup>227</sup>

I found that the initial computer assisted data analysis distanced me from the data.<sup>228</sup> While there are ranges of manual tools that can assist qualitative data analysis, including index cards,<sup>229</sup> coloured highlighters,<sup>230</sup> paper clips, I adopted a simple process of cutting and pasting within on-screen word documents. I used the 'Insert comment' function to indicate temporary categories, properties of categories and record memos. In this way, I could look at the information globally. I created copy documents with the headings of the temporary categories and I copied and pasted in relevant extracts under the particular category being examined. I labeled each extract with its source either prior to copying or after pasting and I verified labeling by using the Find function within Microsoft Word to search for the section of text. I compared incidents with categories and properties using the same method of inserting comments, category headings as well as the copy and paste function in Word. I gained an early familiarity with content because I was constantly moving through and across documents.

I started open coding by tabulating the documents into indeterminate columns and rows in Microsoft Excel. The rows were used to distinguish sections of text or incidents and columns were used to prefix the text or incident with a code so that the information could be sorted using the Sort function in Excel. One incident, identified in a single row, could therefore carry any number of codes, identified in parallel columns, depending on the number of categories that the information fit. In the end however, I returned to moving manually through the material because I was more confident that constant scanning and deep reading would identify other dimensions and relationships between incidents and categories more efficiently that might not have been discovered on first coding.

Following the second stage suggested by Glaser and Strauss,<sup>231</sup> I coded each unit of information<sup>232</sup> in the data into categories of analysis<sup>233</sup> as well as the different properties of

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<sup>225</sup> Liamputtong and Ezzy, above n 151, 276.

<sup>226</sup> Graham R Gibbs, *Qualitative Data Analysis: Explorations with NVivo* (Open University Press, 2002) 10-11.

<sup>227</sup> Clive Seale, 'Using Computers to Analyse Qualitative Data' in David Silverman (ed), *Doing Qualitative Research* (Sage, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, 2005) 188, 189-191.

<sup>228</sup> Liamputtong and Ezzy, above, n 151, 282.

<sup>229</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 346.

<sup>230</sup> Liamputtong and Ezzy, above, n 151, 275.

<sup>231</sup> This is the first stage in the constant comparative method outlined by Glaser and Strauss.

each category. A property is an aspect or element of the category,<sup>234</sup> which provides further refinement or another dimension of the category. Erlandson et al described this stage as *emergent category designation*.<sup>235</sup> I compared units of information, which I was considering for a particular category against others I had already coded in that category.<sup>236</sup> I first unitized information by using different shadings in the computer document and then assigned categories and their properties in the first document by inserting comments against units of information, using *in vivo* labels<sup>237</sup> where possible, such as ‘SD hard to learn’.

I applied these categories and properties in subsequent documents. I expanded and modified them as new categories and properties emerged when I compared units that I was considering for a particular category.<sup>238</sup> This resulted in coded categories.<sup>239</sup> My decisions about this initial coding of data collected at School were influenced by my familiarity with the concepts discussed in the focus groups but also the types of issues that had featured in discussions during the self-defence course. This use of tacit knowledge is consistent with the assumptions of constructivist inquiries.<sup>240</sup> I repeated the process<sup>241</sup> in order to refine the content of each category.<sup>242</sup> Because of this process, the interrelationship between categories and their properties<sup>243</sup> also become more apparent<sup>244</sup> so that I could make decisions about which units would stay in their temporary categories.<sup>245</sup>

Glaser and Strauss suggested a second limb to the categorisation stage<sup>246</sup> in which categories and the properties of categories are integrated.<sup>247</sup> ‘The process not only becomes more rule-oriented but at the same time tests the properties...’<sup>248</sup> A property is an aspect or element of

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<sup>232</sup> Lincoln and Guba use the term ‘unit of information’ instead of ‘incidents’, which was adopted in Glaser and Strauss’ formulation of the process: Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 344.

<sup>233</sup> Glaser and Strauss, above n 212, 105; Erlandson et al, above n 3, 118; Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 347.

<sup>234</sup> Glaser and Strauss, above n 212, 36.

<sup>235</sup> Erlandson et al, above n 3, 118.

<sup>236</sup> Glaser and Strauss, above n 212, 106.

<sup>237</sup> Janice M Morse, ‘Theoretical Congestion’ (2000) 10 *Qualitative Health Research* 715.

<sup>238</sup> Glaser and Strauss, above n 212, 106.

<sup>239</sup> Anselm Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists* (Cambridge University Press, 1987) 25.

<sup>240</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 340; Erlandson et al, above n 3, 118.

<sup>241</sup> Erlandson et al, above n 3; Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 348.

<sup>242</sup> Erlandson et al, above n 3.

<sup>243</sup> Glaser and Strauss, above n 212, 109.

<sup>244</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 349.

<sup>245</sup> Lindlof, above n 52, 224.

<sup>246</sup> This is the second stage on their formulation: ‘integrating categories and their properties’: Glaser and Strauss, above n 212, 105, 108-109.

<sup>247</sup> Glaser and Strauss, above n 212, 108.

<sup>248</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 342.

the category<sup>249</sup> that provides further refinement or another dimension of the category. At this stage, the units of information included within a category are compared with the properties of the unit. Interrelationships between the different properties will also appear at this stage.<sup>250</sup> As units are integrated into properties, the properties are used to determine whether particular units stay in their temporarily assigned category.<sup>251</sup> In this way, '[r]elationships become more evident and the category set becomes more coherent... [and it] begins to take on the attributes of an explanatory theory, or at least (for the naturalist) a particular construction of the situation at hand'.<sup>252</sup>

When all information was unitized according to this process, I created new documents and labelled them with the name of each category. I used boxes, which I created with the border function in Microsoft Word, to isolate categories. I labelled these with the title of the document and then cut and pasted them into the relevant category. When units of information revealed multiple categories, I copied the box containing the information into each relevant category document. I created new documents from the category document, which corresponded with the properties of each category. Once again, I copied boxes containing multiple properties belonging to different categories into the relevant property document.

The next stage suggested by Glaser and Strauss places necessary curbs on the process of analysis. This is described as 'delimiting the theory,'<sup>253</sup> or construction.<sup>254</sup> It is at this point that less new data will be needed<sup>255</sup> and categories become theoretically saturated.<sup>256</sup> Underlying uniformities may be discovered, which results in fewer, but higher-level concepts to work with.<sup>257</sup> This reduces the terminology and the categories used, leading to a more focused explanation of the phenomenon under investigation.<sup>258</sup>

Lincoln and Guba describe similar rules that guide finalising data collection and analysis. These include: exhaustion of courses, saturation of categories, emergence of regularities,

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<sup>249</sup> Glaser and Strauss, above n 212, 36.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid 109.

<sup>251</sup> Lindlof, above n 52, 224.

<sup>252</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 342-343.

<sup>253</sup> Glaser and Strauss, above n 212, 109-110.

<sup>254</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 343; Lincoln and Guba preferred the substitution of 'construction' for 'theory'.

<sup>255</sup> Lindlof, above n 52, 224.

<sup>256</sup> Glaser and Strauss, above n 212, 111; Lindlof above n 52, 224.

<sup>257</sup> Glaser and Strauss, above n 212, 110.

<sup>258</sup> Lindlof, above n 52, 224.

which refers to a sense of integration, and overextension in which new information does not make any useful contribution to categories.<sup>259</sup>

According to Glaser and Strauss, the final stage involves the bringing together of the coded data, memos that support the formation of the categories to finalise the formation of theory.<sup>260</sup> Once categories and their properties were saturated<sup>261</sup> comparison of the data indicated several higher level concepts<sup>262</sup> around which I have presented the findings of my research.

Naturalistic studies must also meet quality standards of trustworthiness and authenticity, which I discuss next.

### **The soundness of the research - qualitative criteria**

Lincoln and Guba recommended specific quality criteria for naturalistic studies. Constructivists argue that conventional criteria for determining the adequacy of quantitative studies are not appropriate for evaluating the quality or trustworthiness<sup>263</sup> of qualitative research. In particular, Lincoln and Guba argued that the ‘methodological holy trinity’<sup>264</sup> of validity, reliability and generalisability are not compatible with interpretative/constructivist assumptions.<sup>265</sup> They insisted that interpretative/constructivist approaches required judgement criteria, which were unique to constructivist inquiry.<sup>266</sup> Lincoln and Guba adopted alternate trustworthiness criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability in their original proposal for constructivist inquiry.<sup>267</sup> Trustworthiness involves asking: ‘How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?’<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 350.

<sup>260</sup> Glaser and Strauss, above n 212, 113.

<sup>261</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 350.

<sup>262</sup> Glaser and Strauss, above n 212, 110.

<sup>263</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8; Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, above n 4.

<sup>264</sup> Steinar Kvale, ‘The Social Construction of Validity’ in Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S Lincoln (eds), *The Qualitative Inquiry Reader* (Sage, 2002) 299, 300.

<sup>265</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8; Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, above n 4, 236.

<sup>266</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 301.

<sup>267</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 289-331; Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, above n 4, 236-243.

<sup>268</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 290.

Lincoln and Guba acknowledged criticism that they intended this conception to parallel positivist rigor criteria<sup>269</sup> and explained that these criteria were guidelines, not ‘orthodoxy’ for evaluating a naturalistic inquiry.<sup>270</sup> They argued that trustworthiness criteria remained relevant to a naturalistic inquiry,<sup>271</sup> because these criteria determine the methodological adequacy<sup>272</sup> of the inquiry. However this did not necessarily guarantee the faithful representation of individual constructions of separate realities, which are at the core of constructivist assumptions.<sup>273</sup> Accordingly, Lincoln and Guba suggested ‘non-foundational’ criteria, which were unique to the constructivist paradigm,<sup>274</sup> resulting in a fifth criterion, ‘authenticity’.<sup>275</sup> They said that this criterion was more consistent with a relativist position that interpretations of constructions represent a temporary, sophisticated consensus of understanding.<sup>276</sup> These are not truer constructions but rather simply more ‘informed and sophisticated’.<sup>277</sup> Authenticity criterion are ‘therefore aimed at judging the ‘processes and outcomes’ of constructivist inquiries, ‘rather than the application of methods’.<sup>278</sup>

For Bourdieu, however, the ‘precondition of true rigour is the reflexive critique of research techniques and procedures.’<sup>279</sup> That is, the reflexive practice of sociology is essential for quality research. By reflexive, he meant that:

[Reflexivity requires] less for intellectual introspection than for the permanent sociological analysis and control of sociological practice ... It entails ... the systematic exploration of the ‘unthought categories of thought which delimit the thinkable and predetermine the thought’.<sup>280</sup>

Bourdieu advocated a ‘sociology of sociology’: that is, that sociological methods should be applied to the practice of sociology.<sup>281</sup> According to Swartz, Bourdieu had two central

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<sup>269</sup> Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, above n 4, 233; Dean Garratt and Phil Hodgkinson, ‘Can There Be Criteria for Selecting Research Criteria?—A Hermeneutical Analysis of an Inescapable Dilemma’ (1998) 4 *Qualitative Inquiry* 515; See also Andrew C Sparkes, ‘Myth 94: Qualitative Health Researchers Will Agree about Validity’ (2001) 11 *Qualitative Health Research* 538, 541; John K Smith and L Heshusius, ‘Closing Down the Conversation: The End of the Quantitative-Qualitative Debate among Educational Inquirers’ (1986) 15 *Educational Researcher* 4, 6.

<sup>270</sup> Guba and Lincoln, ‘Epistemological and Methodological Bases of Naturalistic Inquiry’, above n 8, 249.

<sup>271</sup> Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, above n 4; Erlandson et al, above n 3, 29.

<sup>272</sup> Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, above n 4, 245; Erlandson et al, above n 3, 151.

<sup>273</sup> Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, above n 4; Erlandson et al, above n 3, 151.

<sup>274</sup> Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, above n 4; Lincoln, ‘The Making of a Constructivist: A Remembrance of Transformations Past’, above n 8, 73.

<sup>275</sup> Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, above n 4, 245.

<sup>276</sup> Guba and Lincoln, ‘Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research’, above n 4, 113.

<sup>277</sup> Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, above n 4, 87.

<sup>278</sup> Lincoln and Guba, ‘Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences’, above n 5, 180.

<sup>279</sup> Martin Johnson, Tony Long, and Alan White, ‘Arguments for “British Pluralism” in Qualitative Health Research’ (2001) 33(2) *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 243, 248

<sup>280</sup> Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* above n 1, 40

objectives in advocating a reflexive sociology. The first was that ‘reflexivity was ‘necessary for doing good science’. The second objective pointed ‘towards a moral obligation to extend the changes for unfettered critical examination and communication to others.’<sup>282</sup> This required participant objectivation, so that the researcher remains outside the object of the study. Researchers should reflect back on their own positions, their own *habitus* and how these might distort their objectivity.

Bourdieu also insisted that social facts should be meaningful to the people who are under study.<sup>283</sup> He said that ‘[w]hat we may demand in all rigor of the anthropologist is that he strive to restore to other people the meaning of their behaviors.’<sup>284</sup>

### Quality criteria adopted in this study

I briefly discuss below the quality criteria recommended by Lincoln and Guba for a constructivist inquiry, including the steps I took to improve the quality of my research, mindful both of concerns expressed by Hammersley<sup>285</sup> about constructivism as well as the issues raised by Bourdieu above. It should also be pointed out here that authenticity criteria are not regarded as regulatory, because these are contextual conditions that may not be necessary or appropriate in all studies.<sup>286</sup>

Trustworthiness criteria are also not prescriptive nor finite nor fixed.<sup>287</sup> Essentially, all of these criteria are recommendations about what is considered to produce a good quality study.

The techniques I used to establish trustworthiness are set out in the following table.

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<sup>281</sup> David Swartz, *Culture and Power: the Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (University of Chicago Press, 1997) 271

<sup>282</sup> Ibid

<sup>283</sup> Pekka Sulkunen, ‘Society Made Visible – on the Cultural Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu (1982) 25 (2) *Acta Sociologica* 103, 104

<sup>284</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre, Alain Darbel, Jean-Pierre Rivet and Claude Seibel, *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie*. (Mouton, 1963) 259 cited in Loic Wacquant, ‘Following Pierre Bourdieu into the Field’ (2004) 5(4) *Ethnography* 387, 394

<sup>285</sup> Martin Hammersley, ‘The Issue of Quality in Qualitative Research’ (2007) 30(3) *International Journal of Research and Method in Education* 287 ; Martin Hammersley and Roger Gomm, ‘Bias in Social Research’ (1997) 2(1) *Sociological Research Online* <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/2/1/2.html>;

<sup>286</sup> Manning, above n 40.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

Table 4.4 Trustworthiness criteria

	School A	School B
<b>CREDIBILITY</b>		
<b>Prolonged Engagement</b>	On site for 20 lessons over 6 weeks	On site for 36 lessons over 5 weeks
	Prior teaching experience at both schools	
<b>Persistent Observation</b>	Observation as participant /self-defence teacher	Observation of every class over this period
<b>Triangulation</b>	Methodological triangulation of interviews, focus groups and observation	
<b>Peer debriefing</b>	Over duration of study with peers and supervisors	
<b>Member checks</b>	During interviews and through participant observation at School A	
<b>Reflective Journal</b>	Over duration of study	
<b>TRANSFERABILITY</b>	Sufficient description to enable decisions to be made about transferability	
<b>DEPENDABILITY</b>	Audit trail comprising recordings, transcripts, journal, data reduction and data analysis notes, and interview guide	
<b>CONFIRMABILITY</b>	Supportive literature; documentation of data, journaling, analysis notes, triangulation of data sources	

Authenticity criteria referred to above, are fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity. Fairness requires an inclusive, balanced view representing all constructions of the respondents, that is, steps must be taken by the inquirer to ensure that all ‘voices’ are heard.<sup>288</sup> This involves a dialectical interaction<sup>289</sup> between respondents and between respondents and researcher. Authenticity also requires research to help increase sophistication in respondents<sup>290</sup> or members’<sup>291</sup> own

<sup>288</sup> Lincoln and Guba ‘Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences’, above n 5, 180

<sup>289</sup> Erlandson et al, above n 3, 153

<sup>290</sup> Lincoln and Guba, ‘Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences’, above n 5.

<sup>291</sup> Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, above n 4.

understanding of their own constructions<sup>292</sup> (ontological authenticity) and appreciate the constructions of others within the group (educative authenticity).<sup>293</sup>

Table 4.5 Authenticity Criteria

	<b>School A</b>	<b>School B</b>
<b>Fairness</b>	Constant renewal of informed consent. Demonstrated through audit trail. Results of research to be provided to schools and Catholic Education Office by agreement	
<b>Ontological authenticity</b>	Informed consent, assurances of confidentiality and member checking. Demonstrated through audit trail	
<b>Educative authenticity</b>	Demonstrated through audit trail	
<b>Catalytic and Tactical authenticity</b>	Results of research to be provided to schools and Catholic Education Office by agreement	

## Credibility

The criterion of credibility<sup>294</sup> requires a naturalistic inquiry to be credible to the ‘consumer’ or users of the research, as well as to the participants.<sup>295</sup> This means that the reconstructions of the information provided by the participants during the study must represent, or fit, the perceptions and realities expressed by those participants. Credibility, in this sense, can be established through prolonged attendance at the site of research to overcome possible bias, persistent observation, and triangulation.<sup>296</sup>

<sup>292</sup> Ibid 248.

<sup>293</sup> Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation* above n 4, 248; Lincoln and Guba, ‘Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences’, above n 5 180.

<sup>294</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8 301-2

<sup>295</sup> Ibid 328-9

<sup>296</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 301



## Prolonged Engagement and Persistent Observation

Credibility is strengthened through prolonged engagement and persistent observation. Prolonged engagement involves spending enough time at the site to learn the culture of the group within context.<sup>297</sup> The researcher will have time to test for misinformation or mitigate any distortions which he or she,<sup>298</sup> or even the participants,<sup>299</sup> may have introduced, as well as provide the opportunity to build trust with the participants.<sup>300</sup> In addition, Lincoln and Guba suggested that constructivist researchers spend enough time observing at the site to enable them to identify what is relevant or not, so that they can focus on those aspects which are most relevant to the purpose of the inquiry or the matter at issue.<sup>301</sup>

The opportunity for prolonged engagement in my research was fixed by the teaching agreement at School A and the scope of the permission to observe at School B. Persistent observation was already an element of the teacher/student relationship at School A where I conducted self-defence training. I was on location at School A for twenty lessons, which were spaced over three to four days a week over a six-week period. I was on site for approximately two hours each visit to allow for setting up and packing up. I spent time with the students packing up the equipment after each lesson, which provided more opportunity to observe more about the culture of the school, and the interactions between staff and students. At School B, I observed thirty-five lessons spread over a five-week period, which gave the students time to become used to my presence.

## Triangulation

Following the approach of Erlandson *et al*, I have used methodological triangulation as a mode of improving the credibility of findings and interpretations.<sup>302</sup> This use of triangulation involves the convergence of constructions through multiple methods.<sup>303</sup> I used in-depth interviewing, focus group interviews, and observation/participant observation as methods. Triangulation in this way is not used to determine truth, but is used to increase the

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<sup>297</sup> Erlandson et al, above n 3, 30, 133; Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 301.

<sup>298</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 302; Erlandson et al, above n 3, 30.

<sup>299</sup> Erlandson et al, above n 3, 134.

<sup>300</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 303; Erlandson et al, above n 3, 133-134.

<sup>301</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 304-5; Erlandson et al, above n 3, 30-31; 136-7.

<sup>302</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 305.

<sup>303</sup> Erlandson et al, above n 3, 139.

researcher's confidence that what has been discovered in one data source presents the most complete representation of that discovery, that is, it presents 'a more inclusive view of (the participants') world'.<sup>304</sup>

This is consistent with Morse's argument that the use of rigor criteria in quantitative studies does not necessarily exclude their use in qualitative criteria, provided this can be viewed as a means of gathering more comprehensive information about the data.<sup>305</sup> This is because this is a means of exploring the research question from different angles.<sup>306</sup> The idea is that there can be more confidence in observed findings because information that is more comprehensive has been gathered from different facets of the inquiry. Mason considered that validity is enhanced under this view of triangulation, because using triangulation reflects the intention to capture the multi-dimensional nature of the phenomenon.<sup>307</sup> Meetoo and Temple also pointed out that '[d]ifferent methods may be used to verify each other, but they may also be complementary and contradictory'.<sup>308</sup>

## Member Checks

Member checking ensures that outcomes are being collaboratively negotiated. This is accomplished by the researcher continually referring interpretations and hypotheses back to the participants to check that their constructions have been adequately represented. Member checking can be done formally or informally, during and after data collection.<sup>309</sup> Member checking provides the participants with the opportunity to correct mistakes,<sup>310</sup> but it can also satisfy ontological authenticity because this will provide the participant with the opportunity for a deeper understanding of his or her own constructions through querying the researcher's interpretations, or adding information that may complete the picture as the participant sees it. Erlandson *et al* cautioned that data that has not been verified through member checks should

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<sup>304</sup> Gerard A Tobin and Cecily M Begley, 'Triangulation as a Method of Inquiry' (2002) 3 (3) *Journal of Critical Inquiry Into Curriculum and Instruction* 7, 7; See also Clive Seale, 'Quality in Qualitative Research' (1999) 5 *Qualitative Inquiry* 465.

<sup>305</sup> Tobin and Begley, above n 304.

<sup>306</sup> Jennifer Mason, *Qualitative Researching* (Sage, 1996) 149; Erlandson et al, above n 3, 139.

<sup>307</sup> Mason, above n 306, 149.

<sup>308</sup> Danny Meetoo and Bogusia Temple, 'Issues in Multi-Method Research: Constructing Self-Care' (2003) 2 *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 1, 6.

<sup>309</sup> Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, above n 4, 239.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

not be included in the naturalistic study.<sup>311</sup> This imperative is regarded significant as it bridges concerns that relativism precludes the formulation of trustworthy criteria.<sup>312</sup> The authors however conceded that this might be difficult in some situations.<sup>313</sup>

One criticism of member checking, however, is that the process inherently relies on the assumption of a static reality that the construction or interpretation can be measured against. Member checking cannot be used to *validate* the interpretations of the researcher, and in any case, the participant's clarification, correction, or confirmation cannot be the 'true' fix on 'reality',<sup>314</sup> because there is no guarantee that this is the only or last 'fix'. Silverman also believed that this strategy, which he refers to a participant validation, is a 'flawed technique in the context of qualitative research.'<sup>315</sup> Privileging the participant's final feedback means that the response is accepted as validation of the researcher's interpretation. This is not compatible with assumptions of shifting, constructed multiple realities. Although, I was aware of this criticism, I used member checking to obtain a more complete picture. Indeed, it sometimes occurred as a natural part of the discussion in interviews. Member checking occurred during interviews and informally during collection of data though the focus group interviews. I did not use member checking after the data collection process was complete because of the time that had elapsed between data gathering, transcription and analysis in relation to both sites. This precluded any real likelihood of being able to locate the students who participated in my research and meant that their constructions of reality were not likely to correspond with their memories of interviews and the constructions they provided at the time.

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<sup>311</sup> Ibid 31.

<sup>312</sup> Seale, above n 304, 468.

<sup>313</sup> Erlandson et al, above n 3, 143. Member checking may not be possible in some circumstances, for example, in interviewing the young, the mentally infirm, the critically ill and the transient. See Pamela S Kidd and Mark B Parshall, 'Getting the Focus and the Group: Enhancing Analytical Rigor in Focus Group Research' (2000) 10 *Qualitative Health Research* 293, 299.

<sup>314</sup> David Silverman (ed), *Doing Qualitative Research* (Sage, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, 2005), 212.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

## Transferability

Transferability asks whether the findings situated in one context are transferable or applicable to another context. This standard is often equated with questions of ‘generalisation’ or ‘external validity.’ Findings may not be transferable to other settings but transferability is regarded as more of an issue for the judgement of subsequent investigators.<sup>316</sup> The researcher may only provide an estimate of the applicability of the findings, because findings will always be time and context-dependent.<sup>317</sup> This means that the initial investigator must provide sufficient descriptive data,<sup>318</sup> usually described as ‘thick description’ to enable later investigators to determine whether the findings are transferable to another context.<sup>319</sup> What amounts to ‘proper’ thick description is not completely clear,<sup>320</sup> but generally the intention will be to provide the reader with a description of everything that is needed to understand the findings.<sup>321</sup>

I have provided sufficient detail to enable subsequent researchers to determine the applicability of the findings in this study to other settings. There are also several appendices attached to this study, which detail the self-defence training at Schools, interview schedules, as well as extracts from the journal I maintained at School B.

## Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability<sup>322</sup> is the consistency or the stability of the process of inquiry and involves reporting the research process so that a reader can track the data generated by the research.<sup>323</sup> This standard requires detailed records of the data collection process. Dependability can be achieved by providing an ‘audit trail’,<sup>324</sup> or a means by which the processes of the inquiry can be checked externally.<sup>325</sup> This involves constructing and maintaining an archive of detailed records of the data collected. This can include tape recordings, transcripts of interviews, interview schedules, field notes and observations as well as any analysis

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<sup>316</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 298.

<sup>317</sup> Erlandson et al, above n 3, 31-32.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid 198.

<sup>319</sup> Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, above n 4, 147.

<sup>320</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 316.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid 145-6.

<sup>322</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 316.

<sup>323</sup> Erlandson et al, above n 3, 34.

<sup>324</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 317.

<sup>325</sup> Erlandson et al, above n 3, 34.

procedures adopted. In this way, any changes in the context in which the research occurs will be both 'tracked and trackable (publicly inspectable).'<sup>326</sup>

Confirmability<sup>327</sup> is also achieved by auditing in a naturalistic inquiry and is concerned primarily with whether findings are grounded in the data,<sup>328</sup> namely, whether the data collected, and the interpretations of the investigator based on that data can be supported by material in the audit trail. In other words, the purpose of this criterion is to confirm that the findings of the research inquiry are produced because of that inquiry and not because of investigator bias.<sup>329</sup> Confirmability is achieved through thorough documentation of data as well as procedures for checking the data throughout the study so that participants' constructions, perceptions, and observations may be tracked to their source.<sup>330</sup>

I have addressed the criteria of confirmability and dependability through an audit trail,<sup>331</sup> which consists of tape recordings,<sup>332</sup> transcripts of discussions and interviews, data reduction notes, data analysis notes, inquiry proposal, interview schedule, field notes and a reflective journal.<sup>333</sup> An example of the journal is provided in the appendix.

## **Ethics and informed consent**

Both schools are Catholic secondary girls' schools. I sought and received permission to conduct my research from the Catholic Education Office, which oversees Catholic Primary and Secondary schools in Victoria. Once I had obtained further permission from the respective School Principals, I liaised with the physical education coordinators (gatekeepers) courses at both schools. I had a prior relationship with both of these coordinators through the self-defence courses I had previously taught in their schools. Both coordinators were provided with information about the research and how I intended to collect data as well as specific information for the student participants including copies of the appropriate consent documentation.

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<sup>326</sup> Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, above n 4, 242.

<sup>327</sup> Guba and Lincoln 'Naturalistic and Rationalistic Enquiry', above n 8.

<sup>328</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 323.

<sup>329</sup> Erlandson et al, above n 3, 34.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid 35.

<sup>331</sup> Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* above n 8, 382-385; Guba and Lincoln 'Naturalistic and Rationalistic Enquiry', above n 8, 147 .

<sup>332</sup> But see Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, above n 8, 240-241.

<sup>333</sup> Erlandson et al, above n 3, 148-9.

I was given opportunities at both schools to explain the purpose of the research to the students in each class. Each student was provided with a plain language description of the study and a consent form, which was required to be completed by their parent or guardian. The students who were permitted and willing to participate in the study either handed the consent forms to their respective teachers, who then passed them on to me, or handed them to me directly in class. The teachers kept a record of the students who had returned the consent forms and called those students together just before interviewing.

At both schools, the students' participation in self-defence training was assessed as part of their overall grades for physical education, which meant that it was possible that the students might feel that they were required to take part in the research. As a result, I reminded the students that their participation was voluntary only and they could withdraw their consent at any time. I also explained that any comments they made could be retracted at any stage and not form part of the research.

## **Ethical issues**

Ethics are embedded in the trusting relationship between the researcher and the researched in a constructivist inquiry.<sup>334</sup> In particular, interactions between the participant observer and the participants form part of the data for collection, which requires the researcher/participant to consider how the participants will perceive them.<sup>335</sup> 'The nature of observation potentially makes ethics a real issue since observers have the opportunity to directly interfere with the personal life of the subjects' especially if the identity of the researcher is not disclosed.<sup>336</sup> My roles at both schools were overt: at School A as self-defence instructor/observer-researcher and at School B as observer-researcher. The students at School A had been informed in detail about the study at the commencement of the course and the nature of my dual role.

The self-defence course that I taught at School A was centred on one-on-one physical interaction between the instructor and the students, and constant monitoring and intervention where necessary when student practiced techniques with each other. This was also an assessable unit within the physical education curriculum and their progress was monitored by their physical education teachers who carried a student list to record comments or marks

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<sup>334</sup> See discussion below

<sup>335</sup> Ball, above n 183, 507, 509.

<sup>336</sup> Sarantakos, above n 162, 231.

against each name. As a result, the students would have been already aware of being closely observed in the environment of the self-defence class.

Babbie has also pointed out that when researchers are ‘complete’<sup>337</sup> participants in the study, they must ‘participate’<sup>338</sup> and that participation may significantly affect what is being studied.<sup>339</sup> Ultimately, *anything* the participant-observer does or does not do will have some effect on what is being observed; it is simply inevitable.<sup>340</sup> This will also be the result of lesser participation in ‘the field’.<sup>341</sup> Certainly, one of my aims in participating as an instructor in self-defence at School A was to have some positive influence on girls’ competency in self-defence techniques. I prioritised the teaching role over my research role because the kinds of activities I was overseeing were significantly related to the safety and welfare of others.

However, the effect of my participation as an instructor was also part of the focus of my inquiry, and part of the data collected. As Babbie noted, in this situation a researcher must be guided by methodological and ethical considerations but, because these might conflict, the result is potentially limited by the role undertaken by the researcher.<sup>342</sup>

Finally, there is always some issue of hierarchy in most interviews<sup>343</sup> because the participants are usually presented with predetermined topics, as well as interviewers/researchers who will later define the meaning of their responses.<sup>344</sup> Interviews also create expectations that participant *will* or even *must* respond.<sup>345</sup> Even though the girls were advised that their participation was voluntary, issues of hierarchy were doubled in my research because I was interviewing young people at their school.<sup>346</sup> This was because, the question- answer format

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<sup>337</sup> The Gold typology of observation suggests that in complete observation, the subjects are not generally aware of the role of the researcher: Gold, above n 196.

<sup>338</sup> Babbie, above n 184, 286

<sup>339</sup> Ibid 286.

<sup>340</sup> Babbie, above n 184,189; Schatzman and Strauss, above n 197, 64; Norman K Denzin, ‘Introduction’ in Norman K Denzin (ed) *Sociological Methods : A Sourcebook* (Aldine 1970) 368; Sarantakos, above n 162, 234; Nandhakumar and Jones, above n 186, 224

<sup>341</sup> Schatzman and Strauss, above n 197,64; Denzin, ‘Introduction’ above n 340, 368; Sarantakos, above n 162, 234; Nandhakumar and Jones, above n 186, 224

<sup>342</sup> Babbie, above n 184, 287.

<sup>343</sup> Fontana and Frey, above n 165, 82; Karl Nunkoosing, ‘The Problems with Interviews’ (2005) 15 *Qualitative Health Research*, 698.

<sup>344</sup> Elliot G Mishler, *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative* (Harvard University Press, 1991) 122.

<sup>345</sup> Nairn et al, above n 179..

<sup>346</sup> Eder and Fingerson, above n 150.

of interviews potentially reproduces classroom power relations,<sup>347</sup> while most students are also in the habit of ‘taking part’ at school.<sup>348</sup>

I aimed to minimise this kind of power disparity as much as possible by encouraging self-reflection: for example, about how they thought about themselves as physical beings. This kind of focus on ‘reciprocity’<sup>349</sup> is also consistent with requirements of ontological and educative criteria<sup>350</sup> in a naturalistic study: of giving value back.

## **Format of a Naturalistic Study**

Erlandson et al recommended that the naturalistic study be reported as a case study.<sup>351</sup> However, alternate forms are possible depending on the intended audience, including that found in dissertation research.<sup>352</sup> This study is reported in the conventional form found in dissertations.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I outlined the decisions I made about my research paradigm. I explained that the constructivist<sup>353</sup> inquiry paradigm was the most appropriate design for this study for several reasons. These included the natural environment of the self-defence course, the use of the human as an instrument of data collection, the close interactions of the researcher and the researched<sup>354</sup> and the theoretical assumptions of a naturalistic inquiry.

A constructivist inquiry also values the active role of the researcher as participant, and as co-creator of meaning. This was imperative given the complexities of my dual role as researcher/self-defence instructor, the relationship between my knowledge as a teacher, the embedding of that knowledge within one self-defence program, and the issues that are central to this study. I also addressed tensions between my use of a constructivist inquiry paradigm

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<sup>347</sup> Nairn et al, above n 179, 228; See also Norman K Denzin, *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods* (1970) 133-138.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid

<sup>349</sup> Eder and Fingerson, above n 150, 35.

<sup>350</sup> See discussion above.

<sup>351</sup> Erlandson et al, above n 3, 164-167.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid 173.

<sup>353</sup> The terms are sometimes used interchangeably.

<sup>354</sup> Erlandson et al, above n 3, 16.



and Bourdieu's framework. I described the entry requirements of a naturalistic study adopted from guidelines proposed by Erlandson et al,<sup>355</sup> as well as the requirements of trustworthiness in a constructivist inquiry and how these criteria have been addressed in this study.

In the following chapters, I present and discuss the data. I begin in the next chapter by discussing and presenting the way the young women in my research understand their identities in terms of gendered *habitus*.

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<sup>355</sup> Erlandson et al, above n 3.



## Chapter 5      GENDERED BODIES

I began my research with a puzzle: why do feelings of vulnerability, weakness, and passivity feel so natural for so many women? Those experiences of weakness and vulnerability are well-documented in one of my journal entries:

For the game in the first lesson today, I introduced a version of 'Poison Ball'.<sup>1</sup> I divided the class into two groups at either side of the gym and placed four light balls in between both groups. The object of the game is for one side to 'tag' all of the girls in other team by throwing the balls to strike them on their backs. Both teams can rush the centre once I blow the whistle to attempt to secure the balls first. Members of the team are allowed to pass the ball to one another but the ball can't touch the ground. If it touches the ground, it's 'live' and anyone from any team can grab it. Any member of the opposition team can also intercept any ball, including the target, and then pass it within their own team to start eliminating the other side. Once girls are struck out and eliminated, they retreat to the sidelines to cheer and occasionally cheat for their team by chasing and throwing in errant balls. As usual, most of the girls today were fairly skillful at intercepting and passing quickly – some of them very skillful – obviously their netball or basketball experiences. The 'sporty' girls always stand out in these games because they seem so practiced in those movements – *catch and throw; intercept, catch and throw*. There seem to be a lot of 'sporty' girls in this class. The 'tagger' has to remain stationary while throwing the ball at the target so this usually quickly separates the basketballers from the netballers. Some of the girls were eliminated quickly today, but this usually happens. Today, it was as if they didn't think about catching the ball as it came towards them or try to evade it – they just turned their back into the ball and hunched over in self-protection. They just let it happen. A few of them even turned face first into the ball, hands over faces, squealing for the amusement of their friends. [Journal]

Why did those girls in this moment flinch, freeze and engage in protective behaviours in a ball game? This strongly imbedded experience lies at the heart of this thesis, as does the possibility of changing it.

So far in my thesis, I have drawn on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, particularly his concepts of *habitus*, practice, and field to explore how women come to embody these aspects of their identity as part of the production of their gendered *habitus*. In earlier chapters, I have discussed how, in Bourdieu's framework, women's gendered experience of their bodies begins with early socialisation experiences that relate to expectations about masculine and feminine attitudes and behaviours. These experiences are progressively internalised and

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<sup>1</sup> A children's ball game

shape the gendered *habitus*. A gendered *habitus* is, therefore, ‘an identity that internalizes and literally embodies the division of labour between the genders.’<sup>2</sup>

In order to explore my research questions further, I adopted the design of a naturalistic study, which involved the running of self-defence training courses in two secondary girls’ schools, here referred to simply as School A and School B. In School A, I worked as an instructor/participant; while in School B, I observed a course taught by another instructor. I also carried out interviews and focus groups with the young women.

Over the next three chapters, I will present the research I completed with the young women who participated in the self-defence training. I begin the discussion of my research findings in this chapter by outlining these young women’s understandings of their physical identities. I do this because these self-conceptualisations were significant in shaping aspects of their identity that related to vulnerability and weakness, which I discuss later in Chapter 6. I show that many of the young women’s self-portraits both relied on and used the terminology associated with the stereotypical ‘traditional’ qualities and traits associated with men and women. I also show that these young women used similar framing when they described their physical interests and capabilities. Finally, I discuss revelations of their limited participation in sport outside the school environment.

### **The gendered *habitus***

I wanted to find out the extent to which women’s gendered identity as female is an embodied phenomenon. How do girls experience their identities physically? I began by asking the young women in my research to tell me how they identified themselves. The girls told me variously that they were ‘emotional’, ‘sensitive’, ‘not sporty’, ‘moody’, ‘pretty’, ‘nice’, ‘caring’, ‘chickens’, and maternal. They also told me that girls were weaker, more vulnerable, and less physical than boys. They were also ‘not as competitive as boys’, or as aggressive. The majority of these young women then told me that they identified themselves in very similar terms, sometimes by using the language of the collective. For example:

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<sup>2</sup> Beate Kraus, ‘Gender, Sociological Theory and Bourdieu’s Sociology of Practice’ (2006) 23 *Theory Culture Society* 119, 121.

*We're sensitive!*<sup>3</sup>

*We're pretty loyal and like to our friends and stuff*

*We're not as tough as guys on the outside*

*We're nice*

In their responses, many of the young women I spoke to emphasised certain physical characteristics – such as aggression, size, and strength – as qualities that boys have, while they tended to attribute emotional characteristics to girls. For example, these young women said they thought they would be more likely to ‘sit down and talk’ about a problem, whereas boys would be more likely to ‘bash someone up.’

The girls’ use of the language of gender stereotypes to describe themselves, and other girls and boys, was the most striking feature of the observations they made. As so much research tells us, we are exposed to this kind of language from the very beginning of our lives. Stereotypes inscribe the kinds of attitudes and styles of masculine and feminine conduct, which are ‘typical’ and ‘desirable’ behaviours and attributes.<sup>4</sup> Baby girls are dressed in pink and baby boys are dressed in blue. Girls receive dolls and other miniature reminders of their domestic role, such as toy irons, cooking utensils, and dolls houses but boys receive toy cars, toy weapons, and sporting equipment.<sup>5</sup> Girls are encouraged to be co-operative in their interactions with peers, while boys are encouraged to be competitive. Playing with dolls, caring for younger siblings, and being creative with plastic food in plastic kitchens are highly gendered experiences, which prepare many women for domestic roles and encourage dispositions like nurturance and caring for others.<sup>6</sup>

As I described earlier in my thesis, I have used Bourdieu’s framework to consider how these experiences come to inform some of the central aspects of many women’s identities. Bourdieu used the concept of *habitus* to explain how we act and behave in ways that feel completely natural to us. *Habitus* is that durable system of experiences, beliefs, perceptions, and behaviours that we have literally embodied from childhood. Once incorporated, these

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<sup>3</sup> Emphasis added

<sup>4</sup> According to research by Martin, adults regard these kinds of qualities as desirable in boys and girls: Carole Lynn Martin, ‘Stereotypes about Children with Traditional and Nontraditional Gender Roles’ (1995) 33 *Sex Roles* 727, 734-735.

<sup>5</sup> Judith E Owen- Blakemore, and Renee E Centers, ‘Characteristics of Boys’ and Girls’ Toys’ (2005) 53 *Sex Roles* 619, 619.

<sup>6</sup> Mary Jo Kane, ‘Female Involvement in Physical Recreation: Gender Role as a Constraint’ (1990) 61 *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance* 52.

dispositions operate pre-consciously.<sup>7</sup> For example, we do not stop to think why we walk in a particular way, fold our arms in a particular way, or catch a ball in a particular way. We do these things because they feel perfectly natural to us.

Bourdieu emphasised the significance of early socialisation experiences in the formation of the dispositions of the *habitus*. He said:

The body experienced is always a social body made up of meanings and values, gestures, postures, physical bearing, speech and language. It is through the body that the child learns intimately to experience wider structural features, which are never just an experience of the structural but always entwined with the child's physical and sexual presence, with its bodily relation to others. This is a dialectical process involving objectification in which some features become objectified over time and form the *habitus*. The strongest elements of the *habitus* are those that occur in early childhood for the *habitus* requires a long period of inculcation for practice to unfold. The child also impacts upon its parents and the organization of the sexual division of labour. The logic of practice is thus based on a chain of attributes.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, Bourdieu and Wacquant insisted that those early experiences are disproportionately weighted in *habitus*<sup>9</sup> because, even though *habitus* constantly adapts to new experiences, each fresh experience is incorporated chronologically. So, for example, Fagot et al found that children as young as two and half years of age begin to use gender stereotypes.<sup>10</sup> By three years old, children have learned to make gender associations with certain toys and activities<sup>11</sup> and have also learned to distinguish between boys and girls on the basis of physical qualities such as strength, emotion, and interests.<sup>12</sup> The result of this process, as Bourdieu explained, is that *habitus* always forms the basis for subsequent experiences.<sup>13</sup>

*Habitus* also self-protects by aligning the persons' perceptions, aspirations, and practices with earlier experiences, or else engages in a process of denial and repression when that alignment

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<sup>7</sup> Loïc Wacquant, 'Towards a Reflexive Sociology: a Workshop with Pierre Bourdieu' (1989) 7(1) *Sociological Theory* 26, 45

<sup>8</sup> Beverley Skeggs, 'Introducing Pierre Bourdieu's Analysis of Class, Gender and Sexuality' in Lisa Adkins and Beverley Skeggs, *Feminism After Bourdieu* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2004 ) 21.

<sup>9</sup> Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J D Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (University of Chicago Press, 1992) 134.

<sup>10</sup> B I Fagot, M D Leinbach and C O'Boyle, 'Gender Labeling, Gender Stereotyping, and Parenting Behaviors' (1992) 28 *Developmental Psychology* 225.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Eckes and Hanns Martin Trautner, *The Developmental Social Psychology of Gender* 209.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge University Press, 1977) 86.

is not possible.<sup>14</sup> Sheldon, for instance, has found that children resist contradictions to their gender expectations.<sup>15</sup> An example of this is a child saying that only women are nurses, even when his or her own father is a nurse. Bourdieu explained it this way:

The *habitus* tends to ensure its own constancy and its defence against change through the selection it makes within new information by rejecting information capable of calling into question its accumulated information, if exposed to it accidentally or by force, and especially by avoiding exposure to such information.<sup>16</sup>

The effect is that the meaning and relevance of those earlier experiences are continually reinforced, preserved, and transmitted in the usual ways that people use. Because the *habitus* clings unconsciously to its own internalised history, women unknowingly, and unthinkingly, tend to reproduce the external structures that constrain them.<sup>17</sup> The ‘chronological ordering’<sup>18</sup> of subsequent experiences, which affirm these stereotypes results in a durable, highly gendered identity.

Sally and Lisa were the only girls I spoke to who did not frame themselves as typically feminine. They were adamant that ‘we’re very different!’ Oswald and Lindstedt have suggested that this might be because some people disassociate themselves from qualities that they consider undesirable by attributing those qualities to the group they belong to, rather than to themselves.<sup>19</sup>

## Gendered sporting fields

As I also wanted to know how these young women understood themselves in physical contexts, I also asked the girls to describe how they participated in sports. Until relatively recently, girls’ participation in sport has been more or less aligned with traditional attitudes to the kinds of sports considered to be appropriate for either men or women. In general, masculine sports were those which were traditionally typified by higher levels of physical

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<sup>14</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford University Press, 1990) 60; David Swartz, *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (University of Chicago Press, 1997) 103.

<sup>15</sup> A Sheldon, ‘“Kings are Royaler than Queens” – Language and Socialization’ (1990) 45 *Young Children* 4

<sup>16</sup> Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, above n 14, 60-61.

<sup>17</sup> Lisa Hunter, ‘Bourdieu and the Social Space of the PE Classroom: Reproduction of Doxa through Practice’ (2004) 9(2) *Sport, Education and Society* 175, 176.

<sup>18</sup> Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, above n 14, 60.

<sup>19</sup> Debra L Oswald and Kara Lindstedt, ‘The Content and Function of Gender Self-stereotypes: An Exploratory Investigation’ (2006) 54 *Sex Roles* 447, 456.

contact - even aggression – like most codes of football or ice hockey; while acceptable feminine sports tended to conform to stereotypes about femininity: non-aggressive, aesthetically pleasing, and graceful sports such as gymnastics, swimming or netball.<sup>20</sup>

This approach led to sports being stereotyped as masculine, feminine or gender neutral<sup>21</sup>, according to features of each sport that corresponded with traditional gender stereotypes. For instance, individual attributes of speed, strength, competitiveness, and stamina were regarded as more masculine than feminine<sup>22</sup>, so sports requiring these attributes were more likely to be classified as masculine. The level of personal risk, the rules of the particular sport and team-based nature of the sport also influenced the classification of particular sports as masculine.<sup>23</sup>

As a result, sports involving heavy physical contact, projecting the body through space, subduing an opponent, or using force would be perceived as socially acceptable for men, but not women.<sup>24</sup> But how would the young women in my research think about sport and physical activities?

A number of the young women I interviewed were very clear that girls tend to play different sports to boys. For instance:

Sally: The guys should stay with football

Lisa: Yeah, that's their sport.....and we can stick to gymnastics

Bron: We don't play you know- like rough sports- you know like footy or contact sports boys can have that!

Jess: Yeah, nah, girls don't do that kind of thing. We're more like ballet, gym, basketball - that sort of thing.

Phoebe: [Boys] do different sports, like harder - usually like stronger sports than girls

A majority of the girls said that girls were equally as skilled and capable at co-gendered sports, such as basketball, netball, and soccer. However, as Emily and Laura explained, they

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<sup>20</sup> Iris M Young, *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory* (Indiana University Press, 1990); Eleanor Metheny, *Connotations of Movement in Sport and Dance: a Collection of Speeches about Sport and Dance as Significant Forms of Human Behavior* (W. C Brown, 1965).

<sup>21</sup> Sherri Matteo, 'The Effect of Gender-Schematic Processing on Decisions about Sex-Inappropriate Sport Behaviour' (1988) 18 *Sex Roles* 41.

<sup>22</sup> Metheny, above n 20.

<sup>23</sup> Nathalie Koivula, 'Perceived Characteristics of Sports Categorized as Gender-Neutral, Feminine and Masculine' (2001) 24 *Journal of Sport Behavior* 377. See also discussion in Chapter Two.

<sup>24</sup> Metheny, above n20.



could be disadvantaged by their smaller size or reduced strength when they competed against boys.

Laura: I play tennis and there is *no* difference between the boys and the girls.

Emily: Yeah. But in some sports, depending if it's a non-contact sport or... what kind of sport you play I think boys are stronger. It's like- yeah.

Laura Yeah, they are. You can tell, like the same sport, like... basketball or something like- for soccer, when like boys and girls play... Physically, they're like bigger and stronger...

Sally and Lisa agreed, saying that physical differences between boys and girls were more noticeable in mixed sports or neutral sports – such as tennis, basketball, or soccer – because boys are 'bigger and stronger'.

Lisa: It's just skill and stuff I suppose.

Sally: Skilled. But then like they'd probably would be better at like a footy game, they would be better because they have the muscles...

Lisa: Yeah, at footy they would be better and like rugby and stuff.

Sally: They can like tackle –yeah - bump yeah ...

Lisa: They're physically stronger...

Sally: Unlike us

Karin: Boys are more aggressive.

Shauna: Yep. Definitely, 'cause I play netball and when there are boys playing against you, you just kind of have to be more, like, aware

Karin: They always... they always are aggressive at any sport they do...

Most of the young women indicated that they associated qualities such as confidence, bravado, physicality, strength, endurance, toughness, and competitiveness with the sports they had characterised as masculine, such as Australian Rules Football. These kinds of views are consistent with the research I discussed in Chapter Two, which found that children's perceptions about gender appropriate sports have tended to correlate with traditional expectations about the kinds of sports considered to be appropriate for either men or

women.<sup>25</sup> Klomsten et al found that many adolescents tended to be of the opinion that boys play more physically aggressive and physically demanding sports because they are more aggressive and resilient than girls, while girls play sports such as ballet and gymnastics - which emphasise grace and flexibility – because these are feminine characteristics.<sup>26</sup> Melissa and Phoebe indicated, for instance, that they tended not to compete aggressively in case they got hurt.

Melissa: And we're more scared to go in harder

Interviewer: Why do you think that is?

Melissa: I don't know

Melissa: We get hurt- if we get hurt

Phoebe: Because girls can actually cry and boys don't show pain.

Melissa: Guys aren't meant to cry- they're big.

Interviewer: But it's Ok for you to?

Melissa: Yep.

Phoebe: Yep

Tammy said, however, that it depended on the circumstances:

Cause if you're, like, really confident, then you can be a bit more aggressive. If you're not as confident, you can be standing, like, on the side-lines 'here you just take the ball'...I'll just stand here It depends on who they are, how big they are. Like if they're in the middle, you're like yeah, I'll just stand there but if they're big you're like 'stay away, please- take the ball'. Like if my brother like started charging me, I'd be like run in the opposite direction, 'cause he's huge. But, if it was like, you know, like someone littler than me, like Hannah, I'd just stand there.

This attitude was sometimes apparent during the lessons when the girls empathised with the hurt or potential hurt experienced by one of their group. For instance:

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<sup>25</sup> Brenda A Riemer and Michelle E Visio, 'Gender Typing of Sports: An Investigation of Metheny's Classification' (2003) 74 *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 193, 202 ; See also Sarah G. McCallister, Elaine M Blinde and Jessie M Phillips, 'Prospects For Change in a Millennium: Gender Beliefs of Young Girls in Sport and Physical Activity' (2003) 12 (2) *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal* 83.

<sup>26</sup> Anne Torhild Klomsten, Herb W Marsh and Einar M Skaalvik, 'Adolescents' Perceptions of Masculine and Feminine Values in Sport and Physical Education: A Study of Gender Differences' (2005) 52 *Sex Roles* 625.

Paul moves onto the next defence to a grab. He demonstrates on Stella and there are several groans as the students respond to the look of pain on Stella's face. Paul asks if he is hurting Stella and she says no, she was just anticipating being hurt. I was intrigued to see how quickly the other students identified with Stella's apparent pain.

Laura explained that girls just had a different approach to sport - they 'just wanted to have fun' and playing with girls was 'a lot nicer and easier and not as competitive or anything'. Beth expressed similar views:

I think boys play different. 'Cause my brother plays tennis and when I go watch him, and then I go watch my sister, boys are more aggressive, and into it, and they're hitting the ball faster and harder, and girls kind of take it more slower, and they're not so much worried about it. They do it as a casual... The girls do it as, like, a casual way to see friends, and stuff like that. Team sports. Do you know what I mean?

Melissa simply said 'I just wanted to play 'cause I have fun...' These attitudes were in keeping with a lot of other research, which reports that the different interaction styles and less competitive approaches of girls can influence how adolescent girls think about sport and sport participation.<sup>27</sup> Consistent with findings in younger children of girls' more co-operative and empathetic play, adolescent girls may also tend to be more considerate of their team mates and opponents than boys:

Tammy: And also if, well not all, but generally if a girl's playing sport and she crashes into someone, she'll be, oh, I'm sorry, are you ok? Whereas if a guy did that they'd just walk off-and

Elena: Yes, and [boys] like to push each other over ...

Tammy: And like to hurt each other.

Phoebe also pointed out girls' more cooperative approach to sport:

Phoebe: the guys are always, like, shooting from halfway down the court and stuff 'They, like, show- off more. ... guys' teams, they do a lot more, like, tricks and stuff, if that makes

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<sup>27</sup> Eg Sarah Whitehead and Stuart Biddle, 'Adolescent Girls' Perceptions of Physical Activity: A Focus Group Study' (2008) 14 *European Physical Education Review* 243; Cheryl Cooky, ' "Girls Just Aren't Interested": The Social Construction of Interest in Girls' Sport' (2009) 52(2) *Sociological Perspectives* 259; Laura Azzarito, Melinda A Solomon and Louis Harrison Jr, ' "...If I had a choice, I would..." A Feminist Poststructuralist Perspective on Girls in Physical Education' (2006) 77 *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 222; Clersida Garcia, 'Gender Differences in Young Children's Interactions When Learning Fundamental Motor Skills' (1994) 65 *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 213.

sense- like with the dribbling and everything. But we sort of just try and get it down there and anyone getting a goal, not really showing off or anything.

Phoebe's comment supports findings in other research that girls tend not to want to stand out in a group, or simply do not think it important to show off their skills and abilities in the same way as boys.<sup>28</sup> Robert, the physical education coordinator, also commented that 'I think girls are probably a little bit more respectful of each other than what boys are'.<sup>29</sup> These comments are echoed in research, which has shown that girls tend to have a more co-operative and less competitive approach to playing than boys from an early age.<sup>30</sup> I wanted to know more about the kinds of experiences the young women had with sport and other physical activities. I began by asking the girls to tell me about the sports they played. Almost half of their number told me they no longer played any sports outside the school environment. For example:

Karin: I don't play sport any more

Tammy: I don't play sport

Elena: I'm a bludger. I used to do swimming and karate

Phoebe: I finished last week

Emma: I used to – jazz, tap, ballet, soccer

As a group, however, they told me they participated (or had participated) in gymnastics, ballet, tap dancing, netball, basketball, swimming, athletics, tennis, golf, and soccer. None of the girls participated in contact sports, although Tammy and Elena reported having previously practiced a martial art for short periods. Lisa explained that girls 'obviously don't have the body for [contact sports]'.

Jenna stood out amongst all the girls I spoke to. She identified herself as skillful, confident, and physically aggressive in the sports she played outside the school environment - soccer and basketball. However, I also observed a large number of other girls at both Schools A and B who appeared to be similar to Jenna in their attitudes and behaviours during lessons. These girls generally performed activities and skills more confidently and more capably than others in their class.

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<sup>28</sup> Garcia, above n 27, 218.

<sup>29</sup> See also Garcia, *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Garcia, above n 27; Azzarito et al, above n 27, 123.

As I outlined above, Bourdieu's field-*habitus* relationship helps explain why it is that women go into situations with certain stereotyped expectations and preferences about gender. However, this conceptualisation also sheds some light on why some women are able to resist those expectations and preferences but others are not. Bourdieu explained that, even though individuals share a collective *habitus*, the individual *habitus* of members will vary. He said that 'Each individual system of dispositions is a structural variant of the others.'<sup>31</sup> The differences between them lie in their individual, 'chronologically ordered' embodied histories, which are 'mutually irreducible to one another'.<sup>32</sup> This produces a 'unique integration' of the experiences that are 'statistically common to members of the same class'.<sup>33</sup>

### Gendered sporting practice

The students who no longer played sport outside schools said that their low involvement in sports and physical activity in general was most likely due to 'laziness' or disinterest. When I asked girls at School A whether they would describe themselves as athletic, several in the group began to laugh, suggesting they did not perceive themselves as active in sports.

These attitudes are explicable by other research, which has shown that although the level of adolescent girls' participation in physical activities has increased over the last decade, they still remain less active and less involved than boys in physical activities.<sup>34</sup> For example, an Australian national survey of sport participation in 2009 found that 56% of girls aged between 5 to 14 years participated in some form of organised sport or physical activity outside school hours, compared to 70% of boys.<sup>35</sup> Further, 55% girls aged between 12-14

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<sup>31</sup> Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, above n 14, 60.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Catherine Woods, Niall Moyna, Aoileann Quinlan, Deborah Tannehill, and Julia Walsh, *The Children's Sport Participation and Physical Activity Study (CSPPA) Research Report 1* (Dublin City University and Irish Sports Council, 2010), Mary O'Sullivan, Eimear Enright and Hayley Harrison, '*Girls Physical Activity Providers' Guide – National Overview of Best Practices, Challenges and Recommendations on Physical Activity Initiatives for Girls*' (Paper presented at Second Physical Education, Physical Activity and Youth Forum, Evidence-based Research in Physical Education, Physical Activity and Youth Sport, University of Limerick, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2007); Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References Committee, Parliament of Australia, *About Time! – Women in Sport and Recreation in Australia* (2006) 22; See earlier Sohaila Shakib, 'Female Basketball Participation - Negotiating the Conflation of Peer Status and Gender Status from Childhood Through Puberty' (2003) 46(10) *The American Behavioral Scientist* 1405, 1406; Klomsten et al, above n 26; Azzarito et al, above n 27.

<sup>35</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities, Australia' (2009) <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/19BD2125C6A01444CA2578DC0001E519?opendocument>.

years participated in organised sport compared to 74% boys of the same age.<sup>36</sup> Other research however, found that 47.7% women and girls aged between 15 to 24 years participated in sport, compared to 52.8% of men and boys in the same age group.<sup>37</sup>

Some writers, such as McKenzie et al, and Whitehead and Biddle, have suggested girls are disinterested because many adolescent girls prefer socialising to exercising in classes.<sup>38</sup> Consistent with that suggestion, I recorded repeated observations in my journal about the girls' preference for socialising during lessons. For example:

The girls listen to the questions being asked, but then at least half of them continue to chat while Paul is talking

They are given the opportunity to practice. A few pairs practise the techniques seriously. One pair test each other but a number of groups are just using the time to talk.

Lots of giggling and more talking about what they should be doing rather than actually doing the technique.

Paul first asks the girls to sit down. This class is different to the previous two in that the noise barely subsides when the instructor is talking. Paul is very unhappy about the noise. He blows his whistle and says it is too hard to teach while the girls are talking. He says he will give them two minutes to talk it out and asked them if he should. They agree and he gives them two minutes. The girls take great advantage. The noise level increases significantly. After 2 minutes, the whistle blows. There is silence. Paul says, 'Now, the next 14 minutes are going to be mine. I'm doing the talking, you do the listening. OK?' The girls nod agreement and there is silence.

Now they have to call out soft targets and they have 20 seconds to do this in. There is a lot of laughing and giggling. The girls disintegrate into talking about other topics.

This class appears to have more interest in the discussion side of things rather than the action side of things- ie, they seem to prefer discussing techniques and situations to practising the different ways of defending against those situations.

Cooky, on the other hand, more recently found that girls *were* interested in playing sport. However, their reasons for participating - namely participation, socializing, and fun - were

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Australian Sports Commission, *Participation in Exercise, Recreation and Sport* Annual Report (2010) 14

<sup>38</sup> Thomas L McKenzie, Simon J Marshall, James F Sallis, and Terry L Conway, 'Student Activity Levels, Lesson Context and Teacher Behavior During Middle School Physical Education' (2000) 71 *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 249; Whitehead and Biddle, above n 27.

misinterpreted as lack of interest because these were inconsistent with expectations of more aggressive and competitive participation in sport.<sup>39</sup> According to Klomsten et al, girls are also susceptible to media messages about bodies and ideal bodies, which emphasise traditional feminine beauty attributes and ‘toned’ rather than muscular bodies.<sup>40</sup> Physicality in sport and other contexts might also not be consistent with adolescent girls’ ideologies about femininity.<sup>41</sup>

Writers such as Shakib and Kane earlier speculated that gender conformity pressure from peers has a part to play in girls’ disinterest and reduced participation in physical activities.<sup>42</sup> Shakib, for instance, suggested that girls might not participate because participation in sport and gender conformity can be presented as antagonistic ideas for girls.<sup>43</sup> In other words, she argued that some girls drop out of sports because participation in sport might be regarded as masculine and therefore not compatible with peer ideals of femininity. More recently, Whitehead and Biddle suggested that some girls might be reluctant to participate if they see this as undermining their femininity.<sup>44</sup>

Several writers have commented on girls’ alienation in physical co-education settings.<sup>45</sup> Azzarito *et al* suggested that the ‘problem’ of girls’ disengagement is not a problem with *girls*, but rather has to do with their experience of highly gendered practices in physical education.<sup>46</sup> Jenna agreed with this, saying

I think people take us differently. Like, if there-if there was a boy playing it like soccer, for instance, they take you more seriously than if a girl played soccer. ‘Because I know that because I play soccer.....they don’t take you seriously

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<sup>39</sup> Cooky, above n 27, 226-7

<sup>40</sup> Klomsten et al, above n 26, 633.

<sup>41</sup> See eg Whitehead and Biddle, above n 27;

<sup>42</sup> Shakib, above n 34; Kane, ‘Female Involvement in Physical Recreation above n 6.

<sup>43</sup> Shakib, above n 34, 1411.

<sup>44</sup> Whitehead and Biddle, above n 27;246

<sup>45</sup> Eg Azzarito et al, above n 27; Catherine D Ennis, ‘Creating a Culturally Relevant Curriculum for Disengaged Girls’ (1999) 4 *Sport, Education and Society* 31; Jan Wright, ‘The Construction of Gendered Contexts in Single Sex and Co-Educational Physical Education Lessons’ (1997) 2 *Sport, Education and Society* 55; Peter A Hastie, ‘The Participation and Perceptions of Girls within a Unit of Sport Education’ (1998) 17 *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education* 157; L M Nilges, ‘I Thought Only Fairy Tales Had Supernatural Power: A Radical Feminist Analysis of Title IX in Physical Education’ (1998) 17 *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education* 172; Barbara Satina, Melinda A Solomon, Donetta J Cothran Susan J Loftus, and Keren Stockin-Davidson, ‘Patriarchal Consciousness: Middle School Students’ and Teachers’ Perspectives of Motivational Practices’ (1998) 3 *Sport, Education, and Society* 181.

<sup>46</sup> Azzarito et al, above n 27

But there is also some evidence that girls in single sex schools are less interested in sport. Kirk suggested that this was partly due to traditional sport curricula, and uniform requirements, which conflict with girls' emergent exploration of their femininity through jewellery, hairstyles, and non-uniform attire.<sup>47</sup> Girls' physical activity preferences also do not necessarily correspond with the types of activities that are included in physical education curricula within schools,<sup>48</sup> and which often feature team sports.

Other writers have noted that girls and boys have different ideas about leisure activities<sup>49</sup>, such as girls' preference towards indoor activities.<sup>50</sup> They also have different priorities about exercise as a leisure activity.<sup>51</sup> This is likely to impact on girls' attitudes towards the sorts of activities and sports offered in traditional physical education programmes in schools. For example, girls in one Canadian study emphasised preferences for fun and enjoyment, a positive social environment, a variety of activities that offered potential lifetime activities such as swimming or walking, as well as opportunities to develop more meaningful physical skills through practice and encouragement.<sup>52</sup>

Other studies have also emphasised the need for girls to have a greater choice in the kinds of activities that are available for them, more flexible dress codes, as well as the need to include matters that are interesting to girls.<sup>53</sup> As a result, there are recent trends of developing physical education curricula that is more relevant to girls' interests and skills resulting from concerns about girls' increasing alienation from physical activities and effects on long-term health.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> David Kirk, 'Student Learning and the Social Construction of Gender in Sport and Physical Education,' in Stephen J Silverman and Catherine D Ennis (eds) *Student Learning in Physical Education: Applying Research to Enhance Instruction* (Human Kinetics, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, 2003) 67, 75.

<sup>48</sup> Sandra L Gibbons and Louise Humbert, 'What are Middle-School Girls Looking for in Physical Education' (2008) 31 *Canadian Journal of Education* 167, 176, 180.

<sup>49</sup> Whitehead and Biddle, above n 27; Kay Biscomb, Hilary Matheson, Natalie D Beckerman, Malcolm Tungatt and Hayden Jarrett, 'Staying Active while Still Being You: Addressing the Loss of Interest in Sport Amongst Adolescent Girls' (2000) 9 *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal* 79; Gibbons and Humbert, above n 48

<sup>50</sup> Shakib, above n 34, 1410.

<sup>51</sup> Biscomb et al, above n 49.

<sup>52</sup> Gibbons and Humbert above n 48, 168.

<sup>53</sup> Anne Flintoff and Sheila Scraton, 'Stepping into Active Leisure? Young Women's Perception of Active Lifestyles and Their Experiences of School Physical Education' (2001) 6 *Sport, Education and Society* 5; Anne E Williams and Julie Bedford, 'Gender, Culture and the Generation Gap: Student and Teacher Perceptions of Aspects of National Curriculum, Physical Education' (2001) 2 *Sport, Education and Society* 55; Russell R Pate, Dianne S Ward, Ruth P Saunders, Gwen Felton, Rod K Djshman, and Marsha Dowda, 'Promotion of Physical Activity among High-School Girls: A Randomized Controlled Trial' (2005) 95 *American Journal of Public Health* 1582.

<sup>54</sup> Eg Ennis, above n 45; Wright, above n 45; Hastie, above n 45; Biscomb et al, above n 49; Gibbons and Humbert above n 48, 180; Flintoff and Scraton, above n 53; Pate et al, above n 53.



Robert, the physical education coordinator at School B, observed that the school had deliberately introduced strategies to improve girls' participation in sport and physical activities.

We've been trying pretty hard to change the culture here, over the last four or five years. I think to some degree we've achieved that- Yeah. For sure.

This approach included taking part in inter-school competitions to open up opportunities for students to participate and adopting a multi-activity approach, which offered a range of specialist physical activity units, particularly in the middle years. The students also played traditionally masculine sports – such as Australian Rules Football and rugby – during their physical education class, while the school also maintained a large number of bicycles, which were regularly used on the nearby walking/cycling track. The intention was to provide for girls who were disinterested or disengaged with traditional sports with an objective of encouraging a broader participation in sport and physical activity. Robert explained the approach of the school:

Yeah, look, I think it's really a matter of trying to find a niche, trying to find a sport for those girls. I think that they can and they will have a look at a success....I think they can experience a bit of success and that can drive them to that next step. And it might be something as simple as lawn bowls or as table tennis. It's not as physically challenging perhaps as netball, basketball, or it might be something that doesn't involve a high degree of skills, such as cross country running or athletics, then say what some of the ball sports demand

The self-defence course offered to middle year students was part of this approach. Robert pointed out that novel sports such as self-defence training could open up opportunities for some girls to participate:

I think the good thing about the self-defence is that there's a lot of paired work-....at least, so they were using their friend if you like to-to help motivate them or vice versa. And also to pick up on the ideas that were being taught. So there was a lot of feedback from there, whereas in the other Phys. Ed, you tend to work with-also in pairs but it's not only not pair focused, so they sometimes get lost in the larger group, where they don't excel. Whereas everyone here was pretty much at the same level right from the word go. There wasn't anyone who had prior experience. Whereas with a lot of sports and a lot of games that we have in the PE program, we generally find there's a nucleus or there's a group of girls that have already had some past experience in it and they will tend to excel. And those that don't, they tend to fall back a little

bit.....So with the self-defence, it's good in a way that everyone is pretty much on an even keel when they start off.

It is worth noting that there were some differences in the sporting cultures at both schools. School B had a history of including a range of specialist courses in the physical education programme. The sporting successes of individual students, teams, and sporting houses were also celebrated by keeping cups and sporting colours on prominent display in the school gymnasium.

The upper level of the gymnasium...is dominated by the school merit board, listing school captains, sports captains and so forth. The walls are almost completely covered with framed photographs of different students and groups of students who have achieved different awards or wins. House flags and banners are draped over the sides of the railing that marks the outer limit of the upper level on two sides.<sup>55</sup>

While sport also played an important part in the curriculum at School A, there was far less emphasis on sport and sporting achievements. One reason for the difference was that School B seemed to be intent on forging an identity as a 'sporting school'. School B also tended to have a more extensive and diverse range of sporting equipment.

## **Durable dispositions**

In this chapter, I began to explore women's embodiment of their identities. I have shown that the majority of the girls identified themselves in terms which were consistent with traditional gendered conceptions and evaluations associated with femininity: being cooperative, more emotional and nurturant, relatively weaker and more passive than boys, more vulnerable to hurt, and so on. I drew on the work of Bourdieu to explore how women's bodily experience becomes so intensely influenced by gender in this way,<sup>56</sup> in particular his work on *habitus*. According to Bourdieu, these perceptions are the product of internalised experiences, which he located in the pre-conscious.

Bourdieu emphasised the significance of early experiences in the formation of the *habitus*, but he also emphasised the perdurability of this process through which history is internalised in the body:

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<sup>55</sup> April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2004

<sup>56</sup> Kraus, above n 2, 127.

Girls internalize, in the form of schemes of perception and appreciation, not readily accessible to consciousness, the principles of the dominant vision which lead them to find the social order, such as it is, normal or even natural and in a sense to anticipate their destiny, ... The constancy of *habitus* that results from this is thus one of the most important factors in the relative constancy of the structure of the sexual division of labour; because these principles, are in their essentials, transmitted from body to body, below the level of consciousness and discourse, to a large extent they are beyond the grip of conscious control and therefore not amenable to transformations or corrections ... moreover, being objectively orchestrated, they confirm and reinforce one another.<sup>57</sup>

Bourdieu explained that gendered dispositions are acquired by individuals through ‘the explicit reminders addressed to them by their parents, teachers, and peers, themselves endowed with principles of vision acquired in similar experiences of the world.’<sup>58</sup> However, as Young<sup>59</sup> has argued, women’s understanding that gendered dispositions of vulnerability and weakness are ‘normal’ for their bodies infiltrate the way some women move, sit, and engage with their physical environments. That is to say, the gendered *habitus* is expressed in the ways that the body is used<sup>60</sup> in the different ways that some women participate in physical activities, and also in the kinds of activities that they choose.

In this chapter, I have shown that some girls’ experience of their physical identity shaped their choice of activity – ‘we don’t have the body for that’, as well as how they participated in sport. I have also shown that many girls appeared to have increasingly limited opportunities to experience their bodies in physical contexts through their disinclination to participate in sport outside the school environment. In the following chapter, I consider what it means for women’s bodily experiences when they identify themselves as weak and vulnerable.

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<sup>57</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination* (Stanford University Press, 2001) 95.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid

<sup>59</sup> Young, above n 20.

<sup>60</sup> Kraus, above n 2, 127.

## Chapter 6 VULNERABLE BODIES

One of the young women I interviewed told me a story, which crystallized the experience many women have of a pervasive sense of vulnerability. Jess told me that she had been at home alone while her parents:

had gone out for the night somewhere - probably the footy or whatever. My sister was on a sleepover so it was just me like -you remember Em - I told you? – yeah well, like - I got this call and there were these guys we know - Em and me know them - bunch of guys on the phone, and they're like 'we know you're in there - we're coming in.' Like - they said 'we're right outside your house'. You know what I mean? - like they - they said 'we're coming in and we're going to do this - that - *you* know – this to you'. I totally freaked. I was like - ran round the house turning off all the lights- checked every door. Then I thought well - like they might still come in if they think no one's home so then I ran round the house *again* turning all the lights back on - I was so freaked. *And* both tellies. Hid under Mum and Dad's bed till I heard their car in the drive. Dad went absolutely off when I told him you know? Rang the guy's dad and all that. Turns out it was just a joke and like we're good now but still - you know. Might not have been.

In this story, we see a striking example of the way many women understand their physical identities. I showed in the previous chapter how the young women I spoke to talked about themselves and other girls using a vocabulary reliant on gender stereotypes. This was consistent with previous research, which suggested that girls' perceptions of their own physicality tend to mirror traditional characteristics associated with women.<sup>1</sup> Bourdieu's conceptual framework, with its focus on *habitus*, provides a way of thinking about how these sorts of self-concepts form such an integral part of women's identities. As Bourdieu puts it,

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<sup>1</sup> Eg Anne Torhild Klomsten, Herb W Marsh and Einar M Skaalvik, 'Adolescents' Perceptions of Masculine and Feminine Values in Sport and Physical Education: A Study of Gender Differences' (2005) 52 *Sex Roles* 625; Sally R Ross and Kimberly J Shinew, 'Perspectives of Women College Athletes on Sport and Gender' (2008) 58 *Sex Roles* 40; A H Die and V R Holt, 'Perceptions of the "Typical" Female, Male, Female Athlete, and Male Athlete' (1989) 20 *International Journal of Sport Psychology* 135; Clersida Garcia, 'Gender Differences in Young Children's Interactions When Learning Fundamental Motor Skills' (1994) 65 *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 213; Laura Azzarito, Melinda A Solomon and Louis Harrison Jr, ' "...If I had a choice, I would..." A Feminist Poststructuralist Perspective on Girls In Physical Education' (2006) 77 *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 222; Sarah G McCallister, Elaine M Blinde and Jessie M Phillips, 'Prospects for Change in a New Millennium: Gender Beliefs of Young Girls in Sport and Physical Activity' (2003) 12 (2) *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal* 83.

‘[h]abitus consists of a set of historical relations “deposited” within individual bodies in the form of mental and corporeal schemata of perception, appreciation, and action’.<sup>2</sup>

Bourdieu emphasised the primacy of early experiences in the formation of the *habitus* arguing that the residue of those experiences shapes the way we move, act, and speak, and what we feel. Many women internalise ‘feminine’ dispositions such as vulnerability, weakness, nurturing, and caring from the cradle and unconsciously but persistently ritualize them in their day-to-day interactions.<sup>3</sup> As Reay said, the gendered *habitus* is a ‘rich interfacing of past and present, interiorized and permeating both body and psyche.’<sup>4</sup>

Over time, these feminine dispositions are ‘internalized as second nature’<sup>5</sup> and become pre-conscious. *Habitus* naturalises our conditions, and in Bourdieu’s well-known phrase, we are ‘fish in water’.<sup>6</sup> So, for the girls in my research, playing less physically aggressive activities than boys, and being cooperative rather than competitive, was just the way they ‘way they were’. This is because *habitus* ‘tends to favour experiences likely to reinforce it.’<sup>7</sup>

In this chapter, I introduce and examine some of the ways the women who were part of my research project experienced these aspects of their identity. I show that these young women learned about their vulnerability through vicarious and personal experiences such as in the passage at the beginning of this chapter. This led them to take precautionary behaviours, which regenerated and reinforced their feelings of vulnerability. I discuss how these dispositions influenced their self-portraits as weak, ineffectual and as being at risk, and how they experienced these dispositions in physical activities.

I also show that girls acquire dispositions of caring and nurturance, which impact on how they deal with people and threatening situations. I conclude that the *habitus*es of the young women in my research are strongly gendered, and may not easily be transformed because they select behaviours, practices, and attitudes that confirm the gendered *habitus*. I will begin

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<sup>2</sup> Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J D Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (University of Chicago Press, 1992) 16.

<sup>3</sup> Diane Reay, ‘Feminist Theory, *Habitus* and Social Class: Disrupting Notions of Classlessness’ (1997) 20(2) *Women’s Studies International Forum* 225, 231.

<sup>4</sup> Diane Reay cited in Michael Grenfell and David James, *Bourdieu and Education: Acts of Practical Theory* (Taylor and Francis 2005) 141.

<sup>5</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford University Press, 1990) 56.

<sup>6</sup> Loïc J D Wacquant, ‘Towards a Reflexive Sociology: A Workshop with Pierre Bourdieu’ (1989) 7(1) *Sociological Theory* 26, 43.

<sup>7</sup> Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, above n 5, 61.

by showing how aspects of women's identity that relate to feelings of vulnerability and inefficacy are experienced physically.

### **Self-fulfilling prophecy: the limits and frustrations of gendered *habitus***

Young asserted that women often have no confidence in their own physical abilities and consequently underestimate the physical potential of their bodies.<sup>8</sup> She argued that before women approach physical tasks, they have already decided that they are not capable of performing it and consequently put in less than a full effort. She said that '[a]t such a half-hearted level, of course, we cannot perform the tasks, become frustrated, and fulfil our own prophecy'.<sup>9</sup> This experience is exemplified in my account below of Sam's participation in the 'Gauntlet'. I describe this activity in more detail in the following chapter but for present purposes, it is enough to say that the 'Gauntlet' on this occasion was an obstacle course, which ended in a simulated assault.

The girls have started to bunch up waiting for their cue to move. I roll off Kirsten. 'Good work' - really strong'. and I spot Sam lined up at the start. I can see she doesn't want to do this. She's hanging back hoping for a miracle school bell to end the class. 'Go!' Chris, the teacher blows the whistle. Sam moves hesitantly to the mat and the girls and the teacher Pat, urge her on. She drags her body awkwardly and self-consciously over the mat and into the tunnel. She emerges - she's hesitant- she's not sure what she needs to do. She looks around but she can't see me. I'm behind a group of students. One of the 'gladiators' lunges at her with a pad and she squeals. I wait. I decide to pick her off just before the end. She swats weakly at the pads they thrust at her until one of the girls wraps her up in a pad held lengthways and begins to push her back to the start. Her friends call out instructions: 'DUCK!' GO TO THE SIDE!' Eventually, she twists to one side and is through. And that's when I move. I'm at the other side of the room. I roar something and run to the start of the Gauntlet. I hurl myself across the mat and through the tunnel. The girls with the pads back off and let me through. Sam can hear me coming - yelling - heavy breaths but she doesn't look behind. She's more focused now - she's concentrating on her punches. One pad to go - 10 more punches and she's done. And that's when I grab her. I snarl, I growl. She's so light, I can lift her with one arm. I dump her to the mats and she has her eyes closed. She doesn't want to fight so I push her around 'MOVE! COME ON FIGHT! FIGHT ME! There's just no resistance in her body at all. The other girls

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<sup>8</sup> Iris M Young, *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory* (Indiana University Press, 1990) 146-7.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid 147.

are jumping behind us cheering 'BITE HER! USE YOUR KNEES! She strains ineffectually one more time to push me away - her eyes are still closed - and finally I let her go. The whistle blows again.<sup>10</sup>

Sam's physical reactions, her demeanour, hesitancy, and physical lassitude, were common to a number of young women at School A. From the moment she stepped up to the starting line, Sam carried her body as a liability. She wore her vulnerability, fear, and certainty that she would fail, in every movement and every expression that she made. Her responses were gendered 'bodily automatisms' embedded, habitual 'gestures' and 'postures'.<sup>11</sup> According to Bourdieu, this is because we experience our bodies pre-reflectively. We do this through the habits, which we have developed as the result of repetitive practice, that is, just by doing them. As a result, we are able to live in our bodies without thinking about why or how we do things.<sup>12</sup>

Bourdieu used the term *hexis* to describe the embodiment of the *habitus*. *Hexis* is essentially 'bodily memory' and refers to deportment, 'a durable manner of standing, speaking and thereby of *feeling* and *thinking*.'<sup>13</sup> So, children learn how to move, gesture, act, and otherwise deport themselves by patterning their behaviour on their parents and other influences, and these habits become part of corporeal memory. Bourdieu described it this way:

One could endlessly enumerate the values given body, made body, by the hidden persuasion of an implicit pedagogy which can instil a whole cosmology, through injunctions as insignificant as 'sit up straight' or 'don't hold your knife in your left hand', and inscribe the most fundamental principles of the arbitrary content of a culture in seemingly innocuous details of bearing or physical and verbal manners, so putting them beyond the reach of consciousness and explicit statement.<sup>14</sup>

*Hexis* guides how we see our own bodies and how we see the bodies of other people. We know that men and women stand, move, and position themselves differently. Connell, for instance, wrote that 'to be an adult male is distinctly to occupy space, to have a physical presence in the world.'<sup>15</sup> Being male, therefore, involves learning the significance of size, strength, and physical confidence. Young, however, argued that women's experience is

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<sup>10</sup> Journal, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2004.

<sup>11</sup> Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* above n 5, 69.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid 70.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid 69.

<sup>15</sup> R W Connell, *Masculinities* (Polity, 2005) 57.

somewhat different. She argued that women are inclined to walk and move in particular ways and she noted the ‘confinement of feminine lived space’:

Women tend not to open their bodies in their everyday movements, but tend to sit, stand, and walk with their limbs close to or closed around them...women tend not to reach, stretch, bend, lean, or stride to the full limits of their physical capacities, even when doing so would better accomplish a task or motion. The space, that is, that is *physically* available to the feminine body is frequently of greater radius than the space that she uses and inhabits.<sup>16</sup>

According to Bourdieu’s framework, this is because bodily *hexis*, and therefore *habitus*, becomes gendered through reiterative practice of particular actions, expression, gestures, and other facets of deportment associated with either men or women. Bourdieu used the example of the deportment of men and women in Kabylia to describe how gender politics are realised physically.<sup>17</sup> He argued that the different postures that he observed also ‘evoke[d] virtues and states of mind’ associated with men and women.<sup>18</sup>

Bourdieu’s account helps understand, as Sam’s experience above showed, why women’s physical vulnerability is expressible bodily, in deportment, attitude, and demeanour. Next, I show how some women acquire vulnerable dispositions.

### **Vulnerable *habitus***

Hollander insisted that vulnerability to violence is an intrinsic aspect of femininity.<sup>19</sup> She argued that ideas about women’s ‘breakable, takeable bodies’<sup>20</sup> are so fundamental in our ideas about gender that they appear ‘natural’ and taken for granted. They are invisible.<sup>21</sup> As she said:

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<sup>16</sup> Young, above n 8, 151.

<sup>17</sup> Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, above n 5 70.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Jocelyn A Hollander, ‘Vulnerability and Dangerousness - The Construction of Gender Through Conversation About Violence’ (2001) 15 *Gender and Society* 83, 84.

<sup>20</sup> Martha McCaughey, *Real Knockouts* (New York University Press, 1997) 37.

<sup>21</sup> Hollander, above n 19, 85.



... these ideas are pervasive, widely shared, and constructed through interaction: through routine patterns of behaviour and communication that replicate and reinforce existing ideas about gender.<sup>22</sup>

Vulnerability can also become habitualised<sup>23</sup> and feel normal for women when this disposition is continually reinforced as the result of vicarious and personal learning experiences. Women can learn about vulnerability through, for example, 'mother's messages'<sup>24</sup> about not speaking to strangers, or experiences such as sexual harassment, or sexual bullying.<sup>25</sup> The young women in my study told me that they learned about their own vulnerability in different ways. For example, Phoebe and Bron noted the influence of news media:

You hear on the news people get murdered and everything in the suburbs- [it could] be you

[Hearing about] that probably makes you more aware of it and then you think that it's a real possibility that it can happen and everything.

These comments reflect findings in other research that media crime reporting contributes to people's fears about crime.<sup>26</sup> However, Lou and Sarah also suggested that their parents were also significant influences on their feelings of vulnerability:

Not that they mean to, but just 'cause they're so protective of you, kind of makes you ask 'why are they so protective of you'?

They always say 'I trust you but I just don't trust everyone else'.

Other students reported learning about vulnerability through anecdotal information:

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid 84.

<sup>23</sup> Ruth Streicher, 'The Construction of Masculinities and Violence -"Youth Gangs" in Dili, East Timor', (Working Paper No 2 June 2011, Center for Middle Eastern and North African Studies) 22.

<sup>24</sup> Marianne Junger, 'Women's Experiences of Sexual Harassment: Some Implications For Their Fear of Crime' (1987) 27 *British Journal of Criminology* 358.

<sup>25</sup> James E Gruber and Susan Fineran, 'Comparing the Impact of Bullying and Sexual Harassment Victimization on the Mental and Physical Health of Adolescents' (2008) 59 *Sex Roles* ; James E Gruber and Susan Fineran, 'The Impact of Bullying and Sexual Harassment on Middle and High School Girls' (2007) 13 *Violence Against Women* 627.

<sup>26</sup> Paul Grabosky, 'Fear of Crime and Fear Reduction Strategies' (Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice Series No. 44, Australian Institute of Criminology 1995); House of Representatives Standing Committee of Legal and Constitutional Affairs, Commonwealth, *Crime in the Community : Victims, Offenders and Fear of Crime* (2004); T Chiricos, K Padgett and M Gertz, 'Fear, TV News, and the Reality of Crime ' (2000) 38(3) *Criminology* 755.

you hear about it a lot, like you know people or stuff like that you just get a bit worried. I used to go to [name of school deleted] High, and this girl got raped by a taxi driver. And I was scared. It was so bad. And I was like, “I’m so terrified”. It was ages ago. And I still ... like it’s the one thing ...

Women’s physical vulnerability is also ‘re-activated’ by ongoing experiences of sexual harassment<sup>27</sup> such as non-consensual touching,<sup>28</sup> innuendo, suggestive comments, sexual bullying within schools,<sup>29</sup> flashing,<sup>30</sup> and being targeted by Peeping Toms.

Several girls reported incidents of sexual harassment, which contributed to their feelings of vulnerability. Brigit and Lou, for example, described incidents that they experienced even while they were in the company of other people and in environments where they had expectations of feeling safe. Brigit’s story recalled an event at a nightclub, which was only open for young people who were under eighteen years:

Brigit: We went to an underage and we sat down and these sort of- boys engulfed us and they just sat there and were surrounding me and groping onto us and then we tried to get out and they held - one held onto me- and I felt really and I was scared. But it was fine and he went around the back and then we had to run – away. So yeah it was, it was like we weren’t disturbed by it. We thought it was really funny after. It was yeah, it was – like remember how you were telling us how it’s the action... or something. That’s sort of what happened and stuff shouldn’t be happening. I don’t know- that’s what leads onto rape and stuff like that I think. But it was lucky we were his friends...

Lou told of another experience, this time at a major sporting event:

Lou: But yeah, like you think that it only ever like it only ever happens when kind of like you’re by yourself but we went to the cricket on Saturday and we were coming out and this guy grabbed my sister’s butt and he’s like, you know oh check out the cute arse in the- with the blue backpack. And we were with my dad and so my dad like slammed his leg into the metal bin, made a really loud noise. My brother’s like, you know ‘are you

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<sup>27</sup> Remus Ilies, Nancy Hauserman, Susan Schwochau and John Stibal, ‘Reported Incidence Rates of Work-Related Sexual Harassment in the United States: Using Meta-Analysis to Explain Reported Rate Disparities’ (2003) 56 *Personnel Psychology* 607; Debra A Charney and Ruth C Russell, ‘An Overview of Sexual Harassment’ (1994) 151 *American Journal of Psychiatry* 10.

<sup>28</sup> Carl Keane, ‘Evaluating the Influence of Fear of Crime as an Environmental Mobility Restrictor on Women’s Routine Activities’ (1998) 30 *Environment and Behavior* 60, 63.

<sup>29</sup> Rosalyn Shute, Larry Owens and Phillip Slee ‘Everyday Victimization of Adolescent Girls by Boys: Sexual Harassment, Bullying or Aggression?’ (2008) 58 *Sex Roles* 477; Jeanne Z Hand and Laura Sanchez, ‘Badgering or Bantering? Gender Differences in Experience of, and Reactions to, Sexual Harassment Among U S High School Students’ (2000) 14 *Gender and Society* 718.

<sup>30</sup> Keane, above n 28, 63.

alright Dad?’ He goes, ‘No this smartarse is making comments about your sister. You know, like they just- he just didn’t click that we were with our dad, he just said it because he could, because he thought he could.

Rachel and Fleur also explained how they felt when they were harassed in public places:

Rachel: Even just like what the way ... some people look - men - they look at you in the street; mates in cars, hooting and so like... And they’ve got nothing else better to do like I think that’s disgusting- it’s just as bad as being raped...

Fleur: But even when people just come up to you and they grope you like when you go out... that’s a violation

Women express their vulnerability in the ways they think about, and respond to, physically threatening situations. For instance, Lisa and Sally discussed what kinds of threats boys and girls might think about: ‘Girls would think- personally, I think more about getting like taken away and like getting raped or something...’ , whereas boys might be more concerned about what was happening at the time and claiming ‘bragging rights’:

Lisa: They’re also-because a girl-a girl, I think- yeah. Like they always think about the negative- like, oh no, I’m never going to see my family again, and the guys will be like, you know, they don’t really care, they just want to bash the guy up, so- they bash the person up, so they can go back and tell all their friends, you know

Sally: And tell their friends. Typical.

Lisa: I know.

Sally: You can imagine them.

Several students felt that girls were more vulnerable to crimes involving personal violence than boys because boys ‘aren’t as much as a target as girls are, like, out in public.’ Fleur said for instance:

Guys wouldn’t be attacked very often because they, you know- you know if you saw a girl and a guy in the street, you’d pick on the girl [because] you’d suspect that she couldn’t defend herself.

A substantial number of students, including all of the first focus group at School A, also felt most vulnerable when they thought about rape. Something captured in the expression ‘I’d prefer to die than’ is reflected in research about fear of crime and women’s vulnerability. As

Walklate pointed out ‘fear, risk and danger’ are gendered phenomena.<sup>31</sup> Most rape victims are women<sup>32</sup> and there is strong evidence that women are more fearful of crime in general than men<sup>33</sup> - particularly violent crime.<sup>34</sup> But, as Sarah pointed out, there are also unexpected threats closer to home:

Sarah: But it’s also -it’s just not like out on the street in an alley way- it could be- like people that you know or somebody’s house. Everybody just thinks, oh you’re in a dark alley- somebody’s going to come up behind you and grab you- it’s like – [it could] be people that you know and that’s how people are silenced ...

Sarah’s concerns reflect research findings into the incidence of domestic violence. For example, the national 2005 Personal Safety Survey found that in a twelve month period, 31% of Australian women who experienced physical violence were assaulted by an intimate partner.<sup>35</sup> In the Australian component of the International Violence Against Women Survey, 34% of women reported experiences physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate since the age of 16 years.<sup>36</sup> Other research has highlighted the greater incidence of acquaintance rape in comparison to stranger rape.<sup>37</sup> As Walklate pointed out, fear and risk are gendered phenomena, which permeate women’s public and private lives.<sup>38</sup>

The girls told me about the strategies they put in place to reduce their vulnerability, including situations where they were in the company of other people.

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<sup>31</sup> Sandra Walklate, ‘Risk and Criminal Victimization: A Modernist Dilemma’ (1997) 37 *British Journal of Criminology* 35, 44.

<sup>32</sup> Samantha Bricknell, ‘Trends In Violent Crime’ (Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice No. 359, Australian Institute of Criminology, 2008) 1; Statewide Steering Committee to Reduce Sexual Assault, *Study of Reported Rapes in Victoria 2000-2003: Summary Research Report* (2006) 10.

<sup>33</sup> Steven Box, Chris Hale and Glen Andrew, ‘Explaining Fear of Crime’ (1988) 28 *British Journal of Criminology* 340; Carlos Carcach and Satyanshu Mukherjee, ‘Women’s Fear of Violence in the Community’ (Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice No. 135, Australian Institute of Criminology, 1999); Mark Warr, ‘Fear of Victimization - Why are Women and the Elderly More Afraid?’ (1984) 65 *Social Science Quarterly* 681.

<sup>34</sup> William R Smith and Marie Torstensson, ‘Gender Differences in Risk Perception and Neutralising Fear of Crime’ (1997) 37 *The British Journal of Criminology* 608; Mary B Harris and Kari C Miller, ‘Gender and Perceptions of Danger’ (2000) 43 *Sex Roles* 843; Kenneth Ferraro, ‘Women’s Fear of Victimization: Shadow of Sexual Assault’ (1996) 75 *Social Forces*, 667; Patricia Paulsen Hughes, David Marshall and Claudine Sherrill ‘Multidimensional Analysis of Fear and Confidence of University Women Relating to Crimes and Dangerous Situations’ (2003) 18 *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 33.

<sup>35</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Personal Safety Survey 2005* (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006) 9

<sup>36</sup> Jenny Mouzos and Toni Makkai, ‘Women’s Experience of Male Violence: Findings from the Australian Component of the International Violence Against Women Survey’, (Research and Police Series No. 56, Australian Institute of Criminology, 2004) 44.

<sup>37</sup> Denise Lievore, *Non-Reporting and Hidden Recording of Sexual Assault: An International Literature Review*, (Commonwealth Office of the Status of Women, 2003) 6.

<sup>38</sup> Walklate, above n 31, 42, 44.

## Precautionary behaviours

This sense of vulnerability has real consequences for women who rely on strategies they believe will reduce their vulnerability at times when they feel most exposed, such as at night-time, when they are alone, or when they are in a new environment.<sup>39</sup> These strategies include simply avoiding risky situations and locations of risk,<sup>40</sup> or adopting protective strategies such as home security measures<sup>41</sup> or taking self-defence classes. The most common strategy the students reported when they were home alone was locking doors. For example:

Beth: Yeah- even when I get left at home for about like three hours, I still lock every door in case someone comes or something..

Brigit: When mum went to get the mail, I'd go sit in the car and I'd lock the doors as soon as I could.

It was also clear that thinking about their vulnerability influenced how some of the girls used public space. For example:

Emma: Even though I'm confident, like, if I'm catching public transport by myself in like the middle of the day, if like we have a day off and I have to come to school -for some reason, like, and there's like lots of people driving going past, they're like, you know, all giving me weird looks and stuff and like P-platers, they're like-but that's really scary and I get freaked out

Jess: - I kind of like get stressed enough to like ring people and stuff, because I'm scared.

Bron: 'cause I have to walk across a main road every morning and even if they're just like old people, I'll tend to just, like, look down at the ground, so I can't see them..

Brigit But you always worry. Like when you go to the football, there's creeps everywhere. But I just stick with my parents. Like I'd never go to the football by myself.

Sally felt especially vulnerable when she was walking by herself. She reported that she took some protective measures: '...I start looking behind my back, and I start- like looking at the cars go past, start reading the number plates...' These feelings of vulnerability and anticipations of fear also influenced how the young women saw other people, for instance:

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<sup>39</sup> Mark Warr, 'Dangerous Situations - Social Context and Fear of Victimization' (1990) 68 *Social Forces* 891,891.

<sup>40</sup> Carol Brooks Gardner, 'Safe Conduct: Women, Crime, and Self in Public Places' (1990) 37 *Social Problems* 311.

<sup>41</sup> Keane, above n 16.

Karin: I think it's not so much for me, like being afraid, it's just being aware, like I'm cautious with pretty much every person I see. Like what's he doing? Oh my God, he's a weirdo. Is that a gun in his hand?

Annie: Yeah, I do all the time. Like, if someone walks past me, I'll be like 'oooo'...like if they kind of give me] a dirty look

Researchers like Churilla and Baker claim that their research showed that adolescent females appear to feel safer when they are with other people.<sup>42</sup> The majority of the young women I spoke with also indicated that they felt safer in the company of other people, especially family or friends:

When I'm with other people I feel safer

Even one person and I'm not scared

I don't care if I've [just] got a dog with me,

But you, like, don't really think they'd do something to you if you're near a lot of people

Laura said that she was cautious in situations in which she felt uncomfortable, even when she was with other people:

you put yourself in a position where you know you can be safe. Like I know I've been in that position where I've actually left somewhere where I didn't feel comfortable even if people were still there that I was meant to go home with or whatever- I'd organise something afterwards because I didn't feel comfortable there. And basically, you've actually got- like you've got to look after yourself- that's the main thing- you've got to not put yourself in that position where you know, something could happen to you

The girls also told me that this acquired disposition of vulnerability influenced how they thought they might respond in a physically threatening situation.

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<sup>42</sup> Allison Churilla and Dwayne Baker, 'The Influence of Gender, Resiliency, and Self Perception on Perception of Risk' Paper presented at the Tenth Canadian Congress on Leisure Research, May 22-25, 2002).

## **Fighting like a girl**

As I discussed in the previous chapter, the young women I spoke to used the language of gender stereotypes to describe girls, and girls' physical abilities. They used similar sorts of gender frames to describe their thoughts on how they, and girls in general, might respond in physically threatening situations. Many of the young women emphasised differentiated strength, size, and 'toughness. Boys were perceived to be stronger and bigger than girls, which gave them an advantage. Shauna told me for instance:

...they can protect themselves easier. Like- yeah, they're stronger than girls so, just to begin with anyway, if they haven't done self-defence and a girl hasn't done self-defence and say a person attacks them, the guy would have a much better chance than the girl.

The young women in one focus group emphasised the significance of size and strength as they felt they were less likely to be intimidated by smaller individuals. For example, Phoebe said:

Yeah, it'd be like oh he's not so like big and he doesn't look so tough so maybe I can actually use my self defence and actually get away for once. So yeah, it's different.

Lou joined in adding that:

Lou: I think also being like taller and more like- that makes me more confident like- say if I was someone like- shorter and smaller- like K... for instance, you know I'd feel really...

Brigit ...intimidated...

Ava: ...vulnerable...

Lou: ...yeah- really vulnerable if I was like so small and petite. Just because, you know...

Brigit: ...you don't have that strength

It was clear from these focus group discussions that the participants' understanding of how girls might respond in physically threatening situations reflected stereotypical beliefs about women's nature. Several girls suggested that many girls would scream, cry and slap whereas boys would be more physical and kick and punch, or react on instinct: 'they won't show that they're scared, they'll just do it.'; 'they're really full on, you know, when they go for something.'

I think I would slap - I would instinctively just slap- because that's what I'd do- like it's a girly thing.

Several girls also suggested that boys and girls have different emotional responses to threatening situations. Girls were more likely to panic and cry or scream in situations of threat whereas boys would be more likely to remain calm and act 'tougher' 'to protect their rep'. Some students were inclined to conflate their perceptions about size and strength with perceptions about a person's emotional capability to deal with potential threat. For example:

Phoebe: I think they'd get a lot more violent.

Melissa: Yeah, they wouldn't care about getting away, they'd just care about you know trying to bash them to the ground

Phoebe: Maybe inside like – they might be like - oh this guy could really hurt me but then they'd try to be tough on the outside and like try and hurt him really bad so

Interviewer: Why do you think girls don't try to be tough on the outside?

Melissa: Because we're not as tough as guys on the outside- guys are physically stronger in most cases.

Interviewer: And that's important for you?

Melissa: Yeah- they can defend themselves more

Phoebe: And they're always bigger, like boys at the same age are always bigger than girls so like no matter what, they're always going to be stronger. So you know

Being 'tough' on the outside, or being calm in the face of physical threat, was therefore not just about appearance, but about an attitude associated with greater strength. Boys are tough presumably because they can be. Girls do not present a threat because they are generally not as big or as tough as boys, or as strong.

When I asked the girls how they thought they might respond themselves, most told me that they thought they would also be likely to respond in stereotypical ways. A few of the young women were initially emphatic that they would 'definitely fight back,' but several of them later qualified their responses saying that they would be intimidated by people who were older, larger, and stronger.



Another consideration was the possibility that they might be 'too physically tired to do any more'. Girls from School A were more likely to think about physical responses such as punching, 'kneeing people', elbows, and 'going for the eyes', and students from both schools tended to describe responses that are usually associated with women such as screaming and kicking.

However, a significant number of the students felt that they would experience panic, freezing, and shock. For instance:

Phoebe: I'd be too scared to think what to do, I think

Beth: I suppose it's important to know if it should happen, to know how you'd go. But I don't know; I think I would panic.

Annie: I think panic would set in first and then like freeze, and you just don't know what to do.

Jayde: I don't think you'd like, think of, like, how to do self-defence. You'd just, like, be in shock.

Lisa thought she would be likely to do what the attacker wanted to avoid being injured: 'Take what you want. Take what you want. I really wouldn't care. I'd rather be alive than dead.'

Overall, only four of the young women I spoke with were confident that they would respond aggressively. For Bec and Susie, this was because they had some 'feel for the game' because of their previous experiences. Bec reported that she had frequently wrestled and fought with her brothers:

I reckon - kids who have, sisters and brothers, who fight, like, together, like, physically. I reckon they have a more chance to get away. 'Cause like-and especially if someone grabs you, 'cause you're-you're used to being hurt. Or if someone does something, you're used to it. 'Cause if I get kicked or something, I don't care 'cause I'm used to it. Like, I don't care 'cause I'm used to it. And so I reckon I won't be as shocked, I won't be - like shocked.

Jenna was also used to pushing, shoving, and tackling people, a disposition shaped by her experiences as a soccer player.

I'd probably scream and just kick them. And then maybe if it wasn't- every situation where you'd been approached would be threatening- but if it wasn't extremely threatening, you'd

probably kick them or punch them for a bit and then if they kept kicking you, you'd probably have collected your thoughts enough to do- to do something that's actually [going to work]

Sally reported that she would respond more aggressively: 'I'd just go mental and start attacking them... I'd just start smacking like crazy, I really wouldn't think about it. But later, Sally thought she might trick an attacker by pretending to co-operate:

you try and be like cooperative so then they're like, you know, this girl's alright, she's not going to go mental, she's cooperative. But you've got to do that from the start so they know, 'cause if you're like a bit aggressive [and] then you slow down, they're like they're trying to trick me. But then you go mental later. It just depends, yeah. I suppose.

The girls were more inclined to be self-confident when they thought about self-defence as a physical skill they needed to remember how to put into practice, or do 'properly'. Jess told me for instance, 'I have ideas in my head, you know. Oh, if he does that, then I'll just-you know, or I'll get him into that position so I can do that rah, rah, rah- so it's sort of in the back of your mind.'

But many girls appeared to be much less confident in their self-defence abilities when they thought about what might happen if they did need to use the skills they had learned. For example, six of the young women assumed that an attacker would respond violently to their attempt to fight back, in which case they questioned whether they would want to use their self-defence skills or not:

Would I want to upset them? Or do I just want to co-operate?

They'd be angry

If they wanted to rape me, I'd just let them do that, I'd rather have my life than have them kill me.

Well, if you try to fight back and it doesn't work, like it doesn't hurt them then it's just going to get worse

You're just scared that they'll hurt you back if you try and do something.

You know, you think, Oh God, I just don't want to get hurt. You just don't want to get hurt, like physically hurt, not

Yeah, if you just go along with it, you won't get hurt

These feelings of weakness and vulnerability were emphasised when the young women thought about how they might react if they were confronted by a person who was carrying some kind of weapon. Most of the students thought that a weapon implied the possibility of the weapon being used, which changed how they thought they might react as well as their self-efficacy in self-defence. Some typical comments were:

If they have a weapon, then you know that they might use it. But if they don't have one then you still have ways to get out of it- easier. Sort of.'

If they raped you, then what would they do? Like- then they've got this weapon ...

You don't know what they're going to do next Probably because they've got a weapon-they could do anything with it. It's kind of different than self-defence

For some girls, any feelings of self-efficacy about their self-defence abilities dissipated at the thought of a weapon because they construed death as a possible outcome: 'I'd think I was going to die...' As Kathryn explained, a weapon removed any possibility of mastering the situation:

This is really stupid but, you know what I mean? Like you can fight your way through it, it wouldn't be easy but you could. But if you're in that situation, really violent situation, you don't have the choice, you don't have the possibility to get through it and survive it.

Emma and Jess expressed similar views:

Emma ....And, if they had a weapon, I'd just be like, what do you want? Just do whatever, I don't care, just...just don't hurt me. I couldn't - I'd just say, you know, and run away if I could. I wouldn't try and fight them, I don't think.

Jess : If they wanted-like if that happened to me, if they wanted to rape me, I'd just let them do that, I'd rather have my life than have them kill me. Yeah, if that makes sense.

Only Shauna suggested she might try to fight back even if the person was armed with a weapon. She optimistically suggested that 'if it was a gun, you'd try and point it away from you.' Three young women indicated that they would try to escape or run and one respondent thought she would take evasive action: 'I'd duck- if there was a gun, I'd like duck around behind a pole or something, I know that.' The other girls were clear that they would neither retaliate nor attack.

Then I would just cooperate.

I'd do what they said and just hope for the best.

Just do what they tell you

If he had a weapon, I would, most likely do what they ask-.

You'd just do it. You'd just - 'cause I think at first you'd just be like, gasp, oh, my God. And, if they had a weapon, I'd just be like, what do you want? Just do whatever, I don't care, just...just don't hurt me. I couldn't - I'd just say, you know, and run away if I could. I wouldn't try and fight them, I don't think.

And if one of your moves, like- you tried something and it went wrong... you think they'd be more inclined to kill you.

Many of the girls seemed to think that most women share a similar gendered *habitus*. For example, they told me that they found women to be less threatening than men. Nine of the young women thought that they would be more confident, and two thought they would *probably* be more confident in their abilities if they confronted a female assailant. They told me that female assailants would be less of a physical threat because they were likely to be smaller and less strong than men. Sarah said she would be influenced by the size of the assailant: 'like if it was some big, massive girl, then it wouldn't change [how I reacted]'. Some girls, however, thought they would be likely respond differently to a female assailant. For example:

I think my instinct would be not to go at it full force, like you know, fists and stuff, I think I'd just go for the easier things- not easier but you know, knees and hands, nails.

There were also other considerations that the girls thought might shape how they responded, such as having to protect another person, or even the prospect of hurting another person.

## The gendered disposition of caring

A majority of the young women suggested that they might compromise their own safety to help a companion who was in danger, particularly if the person was a younger sibling. ‘Yeah, ‘cause if anyone left *me* I’d be hysterical’; ‘You’d feel bad if [the attacker hurt] someone else’; ‘you wouldn’t want to see that happen to someone else and think I could have done something ...’ Several girls also suggested that they would either be more likely to defend a companion than themselves or that they would have more confidence in defending another person. Common responses included:

It’s different when it’s actually happening to you

I think I’d be more confident if my friends were being attacked...oh, I hate violence so much - I would hate to have to be in a physical fight. But if it was for my family or my friends, I would do it. That’s the only time I would do it, if someone was hurting them, then I would.

Emily told me that ‘you sort of worry about close friends and stuff more than you worry about yourself...’ Maria echoed that sentiment saying, ‘I’d rather take the pain than someone else have to.’ Looking after younger siblings in particular, was an obligation, ‘you have to like protect them.’ While several students considered options such as running to get help, only one girl considered that running to get help would be the best option in the circumstances: ‘...if she’s going to get taken away, why put myself in a position to be taken away, too? I’m the one who can help’.

These comments reflect gender role arguments about women’s orientation towards being considerate, empathetic, caring, and responsible for others.<sup>43</sup> Chodorow, for instance, has argued that some women tend toward self-sacrifice ‘often putting their own needs at the bottom of the list, preceded by other people, husband, and children.’<sup>44</sup>

Caring can be a form of “embodied gender capital”<sup>45</sup> which might be exchanged for other forms of capital, such as economic or emotional capital,<sup>46</sup> but it can also be an embodied

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<sup>43</sup> Nancy Chodorow, *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory* (Yale University Press, 1989); Alice H Eagly and Maureen Crowley, ‘Gender and Helping Behaviour: A Meta-Analytic Review of the Social Psychological Literature’ (1986) 100 *Psychological Bulletin* 283 .

<sup>44</sup> Mary F Belenky, Blythe McClinchy, Nancy R Goldberger and Jill M Tarule, *Women’s Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (Basic Books 1997) 77.

<sup>45</sup> Beverley Skeggs, ‘Introducing Pierre Bourdieu’s Analysis of Class, Gender and Sexuality’ in Lisa Adkins and Beverley Skeggs, *Feminism After Bourdieu* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2004 ) 22.

disposition.<sup>47</sup> The research into gender differences in physical skills that I reviewed in Chapter Two suggested that many women can learn early about putting others first, for example, through social expectations emphasising ‘feminine’ attributes of caring,<sup>48</sup> helping, kindness,<sup>49</sup> empathy, altruism, community, or self-sacrifice.<sup>50</sup> As Belenky *et al* said, some women approach adulthood understanding that the care of others is ‘central to their life’s work.’<sup>51</sup>

However, these dispositions of the gendered *habitus* that emphasise women’s caring and nurturing activities can also be expressed in women’s concern for those who harm them. For example, we know that many women in violent domestic relationships continue to care for, and tend to, their abusive partners. A significant number of girls at School A told me that they would have concerns about hurting anyone if they used the self-defence techniques they had learned:

Oh, I just wouldn’t want to hurt anybody. But if they..., yeah I’d probably - if I’d flipped him over, I wouldn’t try to hurt him even more because that would just make me feel bad. If I hurt them even more

See, I would um- I’d do as much as possible, you know to make sure that I was OK but I think I would have a problem with hurting somebody. I don’t think like even revenge.

Several students thought they would even find it difficult to fight someone who they knew, even if that person was trying to hurt them

Annie: If they were trying to hurt me, then I’d fight back. But if it was someone I knew, I’d be - I think-yeah - I don’t know - I don’t know.

Jayde: I think I’d fight back but I - I don’t know. I don’t think I’d fight to my full. Like if you had to hurt somebody you knew – but even that I think, it’d be- it like- you’d kind of be ashamed I think

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<sup>46</sup> Diane Reay, ‘Gendering Bourdieu’s Concepts of Capitals? Emotional capital, Women and Social Class’ in Atkins and Skeggs, above n 45, 57.

<sup>47</sup> Skeggs, above n 45, 22.

<sup>48</sup> Eagly and Crowley, above n 43, 284.

<sup>49</sup> Eagly and Crowley, above n 43, 284; Alice H Eagly and Valerie J Steffen, ‘Gender Stereotypes Stem From the Distribution of Women and Men into Social Roles’ (1984) 46 *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 735.

<sup>50</sup> Eagly and Steffen above n 49; Belenky *et al*, above n 44.

<sup>51</sup> Belenky *et al*, above n 44, 48.

This expression of concern is supported by research into women's self-defence. Madden and Sokol for example, examined pedagogical issues in women's self-defence and argued that '[t]o execute techniques effectively one must not think about the results or consequences of one's actions.'<sup>52</sup> Madden and Sokol understood this to entail that an instructor must 'constantly remind oneself that many students are thinking for the first time in their lives about seriously maiming someone else.'<sup>53</sup> McCaughey also found students who took part in simulated attack scenarios as part of a self-defence course were often fearful of injuring their padded attackers, even when encouraged to do so.<sup>54</sup> She argued that 'aggression and femininity are not complementary.'<sup>55</sup>

This did not seem to be confirmed initially at least by the responses of the young women in the classes. The majority of girls at School B were adamant at the outset that they would not have any concerns about injuring any person who assaulted them:

Karin: If they were trying to hurt me, I'd just be like, well, if they're going to do it to me then they better be prepared to get it back!

Ava: It's him or me!

Fiona: You can't underestimate the adrenaline that you'd have like in that situation like you'd don't even know what you'd do. If you were really that so angry and in that split second when you realised that somebody was doing that to you, you'd probably – you could kill them by how angry you'd be, I reckon. Because you can't kind of like think, 'Oh but I've been thinking about, oh, maybe I shouldn't hurt them'. 'Coz you'd be so angry

However, some students thought that they might later regret harming an offender.

Sue: I would probably do something really stupid, and bend over them and, 'Are you okay?'

Bron: Yeah. I'd feel guilty...

Sue: Yeah, I'd feel guilty, so ... even if they tried to hurt me, I'd be like, I shouldn't have hurt them

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<sup>52</sup> Margaret E Madden and Thomas J Sokol, 'Teaching Women Self-Defense - Pedagogical Issues' (1997) 11(2) *Feminist Teacher* 133, 142.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> McCaughey, *Real Knockouts* above n 20, 62.

<sup>55</sup> Martha McCaughey, 'The Fighting Spirit - Women's Self-Defense Training and the Discourse of Sexed Embodiment' (1998) 12(3) *Gender and Society* 277, 281.

Jenna: I'd be too worried about the consequences

Phoebe: Yeah, you'd probably think about it because- it's like- is this guy actually going to survive or something- like because you've like hurt him and now he's in hospital so it's like well I've done- like I've hurt him too much- it's only just enough to get away but I went too far

Several of the young women also told me that they thought they would be more reluctant to hurt female than male assailants. For instance, Tammy said:

I'd probably be more scared to fight against a girl for some reason. I don't know. Because - yeah you'd probably think more about hurting them than getting away if they were smaller I think I'd be less afraid of hurting the guy than the girl

Equally, other participants thought that they might hurt female assailants more than male assailants because 'you could really hurt a girl, you'd punch her and she would be out like a light.' Kathryn, however, thought that the gender of the offender would not make a difference, 'because they're still threatening you in any way, you're going to want to get out of the situation and do your best to get out of it that you can, so you do what you need to. If it means hurting them, then you have to do that'.

## Conclusion

Young's phenomenological account of women's bodily experience emphasised the tendency of many women to underestimate their bodily capacities.<sup>56</sup> In the previous chapter, I showed that this underestimation is the result of a gendered *habitus*, in which girls acquire an understanding of their bodies as weaker, and less resilient than boys'. In this chapter, I have shown how girls' gendered *habitus* also influences how they think about their physical safety and the kinds of self-protective behaviours they might put into place. I have also shown how feminine dispositions of vulnerability, but also nurturance and caring, influence how girls experience their bodies and circumstances in which the safety of that body is threatened.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, some women treat their bodies as vulnerable, weak, and physically ineffectual because they doubt their abilities to direct their bodies to perform in unfamiliar ways, as well as their ability to exercise some control over their environments.

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<sup>56</sup> Young, above n 8.



<sup>57</sup> These kinds of experiences of the body are deeply embedded in gendered *habitus* and, as I have shown in this discussion, can intervene in women's perceptions of their abilities to use their bodies to deal with threat.

The girls' observations of their own, and other girls', abilities in threatening situations ultimately reflected gender stereotypes, and were consistent with their previous observations about the different qualities of boys and girls. This reflects McCaughey's argument that women have developed a demeanour that compromises how they deal with threatening situations.<sup>58</sup> The majority of students reported that they would 'fight like girls', that is, they would be likely to panic, scream, kick, yell. They stated that girls are disadvantaged in physical contexts by their lesser strength, size, resilience, and toughness. But they also reported that how they responded to threat might be influenced by feelings of empathy towards people in their care, and potentially towards persons who threatened them.

The persistence of the girls' gender stereotyping can be explained by drawing on Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*. *Habitus* provides people with an internal classification scheme and selection process, which enables them to interpret new information by relating it to similar previous information and reject information that is not consistent with those earlier experiences. In other words, *habitus* self-selects on the basis of its previous history. The residual 'sediment' of those past experiences is enacted in the present, shaping practice. As a result, the *habitus* ends up regenerating the structures that structured the *habitus* in the first place.<sup>59</sup> Bourdieu explained that:

[t]hrough the systematic 'choices' it makes among the places, events and people that might be frequented, the *habitus* tends to protect itself from crises and critical challenges by providing itself with a milieu to which it is as pre-adapted as possible, that is, a relatively constant universe of situations tending to reinforce its dispositions by offering the market most favourable to its products.<sup>60</sup>

As a result, the resilience of *habitus* suggests that it is not easily amenable to transformation. McCaughey insisted that gender 'requires constant enforcement and repetition.'<sup>61</sup> She said:

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<sup>57</sup> Albert Bandura, 'Social Cognitive Theory: An Agentic Perspective' (2001) *52 Annual Review of Psychology* 1, 10.

<sup>58</sup> McCaughey, 'The Fighting Spirit', above n 55, 288.

<sup>59</sup> David Swartz, *Culture and Power: the Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (University of Chicago Press, 1997) 103.

<sup>60</sup> Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, above n 5, 61

<sup>61</sup> McCaughey, 'The Fighting Spirit' above n 55, 280.

Although implicitly misrecognized as natural facts, commonsense understandings of gender are rehearsed over and over; they are not natural and therefore not as stable as they may seem and often feel. Gender ideology affects the way we interpret and experience physical bodies. Gender is a lived ideology-a system of ideas about men and women with which we live our lives. As lived ideology, those ideas get transformed into specific bodily practices. As a collection of dispositions, gender is knowledge embodied through rigorous education<sup>62</sup>

This points the way to changing how women practice gender – on the assumption that women can, and are able to, take advantage of opportunities for transformation. In the following chapter, I consider the possibilities for transforming those aspects of women's identity through self-defence training.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter 7 TRANSFORMING HABITUS

If there is one tendency researchers all need to avoid, it is the seduction of generalising. The point of this was brought home to me when I re-read the journal I had kept as I engaged my research project in two schools. This is the entry from the day I ran my last class at one of the schools and decided to use an exercise called 'The Gauntlet'. My entry highlights the difficulty of constructing any essentialist account of women's experience:

One by one, the students wriggle through plastic tubing, hurl their bodies at other students who thrust large impact pads in their way, run across large, doughy, high jump crash mats, run across cylinders and vaulting equipment, fend off more students who strike at them in turn, and then defend themselves in simulated assaults by instructors wearing protective clothing. The objective is to evade or escape the assaults or force the instructors to submit. Each run through the Gauntlet is timed and chocolate prizes are awarded to the fastest students. Every so often, I give a student a 15 second start and then chase her through the Gauntlet until I bring her to ground. Today, a few have been very strong - kicking, punching from the moment I touch them. A couple - just too fast, twisting and turning out of my reach. Most I provoked into fighting back in one way or another. They love to pinch - pinching is highly underrated! but it doesn't work as well on me when I'm all fired up. A few girls have just lain there - sometimes I just can't provoke them into moving. When I push them around and yell, they close their eyes, hug their arms in tight and wait for it all to end even though the other students are calling out encouragement and advice.

What this entry reminds me about, firstly, is that the young women in my class did not all react in the same way. That crucial insight needs to be brought into some kind of critical dialogue with Bourdieu's work on *habitus*. In Bourdieu's framework, our history and experience are lived and enacted through the body. There is dialectic at work here, as repetitive and 'old' experience is added slowly - almost like slowly accreting sediment to *habitus* - even as new experiences are incorporated in some fashion, both bodily and cognitively. Women's experience of their identities is, therefore, an accumulation of every encounter, situation, or practice in which they have learned about their vulnerability and breakability.

One of my research questions specifically set out to attend to the possibilities of changing those aspects of women's identity through a pedagogic process of self-defence training.

While some writers have criticised Bourdieu's framework for failing to sufficiently acknowledge the prospects both for reflexivity and change,<sup>1</sup> it seems that Bourdieu remained entirely open to the possibility of change courtesy of specific pedagogic processes. He noted, for example, that 'pedagogical action' can open up the possibilities of 'freedom' based on the individual's 'awareness and knowledge of the conditionings undergone and on the imposition of new conditions designed durably to counter their effects.'<sup>2</sup> In other words, people can deliberately alter habits through educative practices, which are designed to create replacement habits. However, Bourdieu added a crucial caveat when he pointed to a synchronous relation of freedom and restraint in his framework. By this, I mean that he agreed that people can change but insisted that *habitus* limits this ability to change.<sup>3</sup>

In the previous two chapters, I presented some of my findings in relation to key aspects of my research. Specifically, I attempted to address these questions:

To what extent is women's gendered identity as female/feminine an embodied phenomenon?

How do girls and women embody their identities with regard to those elements that identify women as vulnerable, passive, and physically timid?

In Chapter Five, I showed that the *habitus* of the girls in my research appeared strongly gendered. I discovered that the majority of the girls thought about themselves in terms of typical female or feminine qualities such as 'co-operation', 'emotional expressivity, and a quality many could only talk about as 'niceness'. Many of them also thought about themselves in the same sorts of terms when they talked about their sports participation. I also reported on the way many of the young women were cutting back their engagement in athletic or sporting activities outside the school environment. In Chapter Six, I explored how this gendered *habitus* shaped both what and how they thought about threats to their physical integrity.

In this chapter, I consider the possibilities of transforming those aspects of their identity that relate to feelings of vulnerability and weakness through self-defence training. I begin by briefly describing the different pedagogic approaches of the two self-defence training courses

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<sup>1</sup> Eg C Calhoun, E LiPuma, and M Postone, *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives* (University of Chicago Press, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, 'Scattered Remarks' (1999) 2(3) *European Journal of Social Theory* 334, 340.

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of Theory of Practice* (Cambridge University Press, 1977) 166; Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J D Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, (University of Chicago Press, 1992) 133.

I researched. I do this because, while the two self-defence training courses overlapped in regard to the kinds of skills we taught, there were some significant differences between the courses. I then explore the girls' responses to self-defence training, particularly what they had to say about their feelings, and experience of their capacity to engage in self-defence. I show that many of the girls did not feel differently about themselves and their self-defence abilities after participating in self-defence training. Equally, a small group of these young women – chiefly those who had participated in the more physically challenging of the two self-defence courses – experienced transient feelings of empowerment and capability.

### **Pedagogic practices**

As I have explained earlier in my thesis, I taught one self-defence course at School A while Paul, a young male teacher from a local martial arts school, taught another course at School B. I had trained in karate for thirteen years prior to teaching this course, and I had five years' experience in teaching self-defence in a range of different environments. Paul had practiced Taekwondo for over twenty years. He had just begun teaching general self-defence skills in schools, although he had substantial experience in teaching the martial art of Taekwondo to children and young adolescents at a local club. As I outlined in Chapter Four, there are no guidelines for the design of self-defence courses. Most research into self-defence training has addressed what can best be described as the psychological effects of training, like perceptions of increased self-efficacy, self-esteem, and self-confidence.<sup>4</sup> However, this research rarely includes explicit descriptions of what instructors taught in the self-defence courses that were researched, or what kinds of teaching methods were used. Several writers have, however, agreed that the strategies and tactics taught to women should be simple, straightforward in application, and not require any prior knowledge of self-defence.<sup>5</sup> For example, Madden and

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<sup>4</sup> Eg Julie C Weitlauf, Ronald E Smith and Daniel Cervone, 'Generalization Effects of Coping-Skills Training: Influence of Self-Defense Training on Women's Efficacy Beliefs, Assertiveness, and Aggression' (2000) 85 *Journal of Applied Psychology* 625; Leanne R Brecklin, 'Evaluation Outcomes of Self-Defense Training for Women: A Review' (2008) 13 *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 60; Julie C Weitlauf, Daniel Cervone, Ronald E Smith and P M Wright, 'Assessing Generalization in Perceived Self-Efficacy: Multidomain and Global Assessments of the Effects of Self-Defense Training for Women' (2001) 27 *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 1683.

<sup>5</sup> Patricia McDaniel, 'Self-Defense Training, and Women's Fear of Crime' (1993) 1 *Women's Studies International Forum* 37; Carrie A Rentschler, 'Women's Self-Defence: Physical Education for Everyday Life' (1999) 27 *Women's Studies Quarterly* 152.

Sokol recommended that physical techniques practiced in self-defence classes 'be very simple and adaptable to any physical condition.'<sup>6</sup>

Paul and I drew from our respective martial arts to design and carry out a curriculum for what we both considered appropriate practice for self-defence training. Writers such as Brecklin, Lidsker, and Fraser and Russell have argued for the idea of a single sex basis for offering self-defence courses for women.<sup>7</sup> Brecklin recommended that schools should design 'female only' self-defense classes to 'counter traditional gender-role socialization and to encourage females to believe that they have both the right and will develop the ability to defend themselves.'<sup>8</sup> Madden and Sokol also recommended that women should be the primary instructors in co-taught self-defence courses.<sup>9</sup> My reading of this research and my own experience were such as to influence my preference for a co-taught course in which I was the primary instructor. I used co-delivery to enable more realistic demonstrations of different skills through aggressive role-playing. I used a male co-instructor at School A in this particular course for most activities except simulated assault sessions, which were offered in the final week of the course.

I had adopted a 'trial and error' approach to teaching self-defence. When I first began teaching, I had included what was probably a bewildering number and variety of skills and techniques. This was because I wanted to share what I had learned and because I wanted students to be able to choose what felt right for them. As with most sports and activities, some people find certain actions easier than others.

Together with a colleague, I eventually settled on what I thought worked best for the students. I had certain ideas about what should be included in a self-defence course for women based on my own experiences. We trimmed back the activities, discarded unnecessary and duplicate techniques, and settled on a more elementary and foundational structure for teaching self-defence.

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<sup>6</sup> Margaret E Madden and Thomas J Sokol, 'Teaching Women Self-Defense: Pedagogical Issues' (1997) 11(2) *Feminist Teacher* 133, 143.

<sup>7</sup> Kari L Fraser and Glenda M Russell, 'The Role of the Group in Acquiring Self-Defense Skills: Results of a Qualitative Study' (2000) 31 *Small Group Research* 397; Joan Lidsker, *Women and Self-Defense Training: A Study of Psychological Changes Experienced by Participants in Relation to Assault History* (D Psych Thesis, Pacific Graduate School of Psychology, 1991); Leanne R Brecklin, 'Self-Defense/Assertiveness Training, Women's Victimization History, and Psychological Characteristics' (2004) 10 *Violence Against Women* 479.

<sup>8</sup> Brecklin, 'Evaluation Outcomes' above n 4, 74.

<sup>9</sup> Madden and Sokol, above n 6.

I structured the eventual lesson plan around teaching a small number of uncomplicated techniques that could be adapted to a number of different situations, providing simulated assault experiences, and building in time to practice. Generally, each lesson was ‘thematically’ constructed around different ways of fighting or different assault situations. In a typical five lesson structure, I introduced different strikes, defences, and holds in the first two classes. I followed this with exercises in floor techniques or ‘ground work’ over the next two classes. These were scenarios in which students practiced a number of defensive moves from a prone position. I included defences against weapons in the fourth lesson. The last class was reserved for the students’ ‘graduation’, which required them to engage in a simulated assault scenario the girls and I referred to as the ‘Gauntlet’<sup>10</sup>.

Madden and Sokol did not have students practice against each other in class so that they did not ‘reinforce a tendency to withhold power or “pull” techniques’.<sup>11</sup> They recommended that female self-defence students practice first against focus pads and shields, and then against male instructors wearing body armour.<sup>12</sup> I used a similar approach at School A. I showed the participants how to hold padded shields to protect themselves so they could practice striking and kicking on one another. They were divided into four groups of 6 or 7 and each student had a turn at holding a shield for others in the group to strike at. This meant that each student had between 7-8 opportunities to practice. Each student struck the pad several times on their turn. I also rotated into each group so that I could work with students individually on each technique. In general, this activity took between 10 -12 minutes to complete.

I included contact based games in each lesson, which gradually increased in the intensity of physicality demands and in the level of aggression required. For example, in the first lesson, the students used impact pads or shields against each other to progressively force competitors from a designated space in an elimination-style contest until one champion remained.

In Lesson Two, all members of the class clustered on their knees on a confined space on a padded floor in a game referred to as ‘Last Man Kneeling.’ The objective of this game was for students to eject as many other students from a designated space as they could without being forced out themselves. Often students would form brief coalitions with their immediate neighbours to wrestle others who were close by and then fight within the coalition to force

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<sup>10</sup> I have provided a more detailed description of the training schedule, including the lesson planner that I used in each class, in the Appendix.

<sup>11</sup> Madden and Sokol above n 6, 137.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid 144.

coalition members from the arena. So, for example, when only three students remained on the mats, two would join forces to exclude the third and then fight each other to become the 'last man kneeling.'

In the third lesson, the students competed in a 'wrestling tournament'. In the first round, the girls paired up and began to wrestle from a kneeling position. A 'winner' was declared from each pair after one girl forced her partner to submit. Each winner progressed to the next round until the 'ultimate champion' remained. In the fourth lesson, I added the additional complexity which required the participants to deal with an armed attacker. In the final lesson, the students competed in a time trial obstacle course known as 'The Gauntlet', which I have referred to in the introduction to this chapter. In the course of this exercise, I instructed the girls to practice their techniques on me using all of their force. This meant they could hit and kick me as hard as was possible for them, or to try to dislocate my fingers and so on. I only restricted biting to the point of drawing blood and attacks directed towards my eyes as I did not wear a helmet. Madden and Sokol agreed with this approach, insisting that self-defence training needs to be 'as realistic as possible.'<sup>13</sup> This is one of the characteristics of padded attacker courses such as Model Mugging, which I discussed in the previous chapter. McCaughey has also pointed out that:

...teaching women under high-stress, high-adrenaline conditions realistically captures the emotional and physical conditions under which women would have to defend themselves...Fighting under conditions of terror, or simply in a high-adrenaline state, also enable students to commit the fighting techniques to bodily memory, so that women's first response in a real-life situation will be to fight.<sup>14</sup>

I aimed to recreate a stress situation through a chase, which culminated in The Gauntlet. We had prepared for this by playing versions of the children's game 'tiggy' in earlier lessons. I constructed the Gauntlet with whatever gymnastic and sporting equipment was to hand on the day. The obstacles usually consisted of the high impact mats that are used in high jumping training. This provided a heavy 'wet sand' sensation when run across, which usually slowed the girls down. I also included the kinds of concertina tunnels that are commonly used in gymnastics activities with younger children as well as various foam blocks and shapes. Each student was required to navigate this series of obstacles. Usually, this involved climbing over

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid .

<sup>14</sup> Martha McCaughey, *Real Knockouts –The Physical Feminism of Women's Self-Defense* (New York University Press, 1997) 104.



the assortment of pads and blocks, crawling through the tunnels, and pushing, punching and kicking a path through two groups of four students who held impact pads to impede their progress. They were also expected to defend my attack, which could occur at any time in the process. I often gave the girls a head start and then chased them through the Gauntlet until I was close enough to tackle them and bring them to the ground.

The use of contact activities, such as punching bags or wrestling, was the most significant difference between the course at School A and the course at School B. The course at School B made far fewer physical demands of the students. The participants did not practice any striking or throwing techniques with impact. They did not use any equipment until the last week, when some of the classes used gymnastics mats to practice falling. Paul also continually emphasised that the girls should be careful not to hurt one another.

Another difference was the way in which we each incorporated revision. I used the skills from the previous lesson as the foundation of the next lesson so that I incorporated revision as part of teaching each new skill. Paul however, emphasised continual review. He taught a wide range of techniques. He began each lesson with a review of skills the girls had learned the previous lesson, and then ended each lesson with a review of everything he had taught that day. The girls learned a number of different skills in each lesson, generally between 11 and 17 different techniques, which included blocking tactics, strikes, escapes from different holds, grappling techniques, and knife attacks. Usually in the first class, the students played a short game based on one of rules they learned. In general, Paul asked for student volunteers to demonstrate different skills and then divided the group into pairs to practice the skill that had just been demonstrated.

A typical four-lesson structure for a group began with an explanation of a general rule: for example, 'soft targets and hard weapons'. In this example, Paul explained to each class that the victim of an attack should focus on soft targets which cause the most pain to an attacker, such as a person's nose, eyes, groin, or behind the knee. The hard weapon is the body part that is most effective to use as a weapon, such as a knee, using the foot to kick, elbow, fingers to poke into an offender's eyes or fist and so forth. I described this process in my journal:

Paul asks the class to name 'hard' weapons in the body. The girls call out:

HEAD! TEETH ELBOW FOOT! TOE! CHIN! PALM OF HAND! FOREARM! SHOULDER!  
'BUM' FINGERS!

Paul then asks what the 'soft' parts of the body are. Suggestions are

EYES! STOMACH! GROIN! CHIN! NOSE! NECK! CHEST! EAR! FINGERS! MOUTH!  
TOES! THROAT! FEET! HAIR! SKIN!

Paul then demonstrated the relevant moves, and the girls then practised different applications of the rule. For example, the girls practised using the heel of their palm to first strike their partner's chin and *solar plexis* and followed up by using a knee to strike their partner's groin. The girls did not use any force in their practice. Paul followed this with a range of different defensive movements including defences to chokeholds and grabs. In the second and third class, the girls learned more defences to grabs, how to restrain another person, how to escape from restraints such as bear hugs and head locks. They also learn how to use their body to throw another person. In the final class, Paul taught the girls how to respond when confronted by more than one assailant as well as different throwing techniques.

I have taken this time to explain some of the differences in the pedagogical approaches of the two self-defence courses because, although Bourdieu and others have suggested that people can change aspects of their identity through some form of pedagogic practice, it is unclear what form this can, or should, take. Exploring two different courses, therefore, was a more comprehensive and fruitful means of addressing my last research question: namely, can women change aspects of their identity through a specific learning or training process?

Related to this is the question about how such a change process can occur.

### **The transformative potential of self-defence training**

As I indicated earlier in my thesis, I have used Bandura's theory of self-efficacy to think about how an individual *habitus* can change.<sup>15</sup> Although a few writers such as Spencer, Wade, McCaughey and Tarr have written about the kinds of practices through which change can occur, these have not sufficiently addressed questions about how and why change happens.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Albert Bandura, 'Self-Efficacy Mechanism in Human Agency' (1982) 37 (2) *American Psychologist* 122.

<sup>16</sup> See Lisa Wade, 'The Emancipatory Promise of the Habitus: Lindy Hop, the Body, and Social Change' (2011) 12 *Ethnography* 224; Dale Spencer, 'Habit(us), Body Techniques and Body Callousing: An Ethnography of Mixed Martial Arts' (2009) 5(4) (2009) *Body and Society* 119; Martha McCaughey, 'The Fighting Spirit: Women's Self-Defense Training and the Discourse of Sexed Embodiment' (1988) 12(3) *Gender and Society*

Bandura used self-efficacy theory to explore people's perceptions about their capabilities. He said that a person's perceived self-efficacy affects the kinds of things they do, how much effort they put into an activity, and how persistent they are in accomplishing the activity despite the hurdles and aversive experiences they encounter.<sup>17</sup> A person's expectations of her or her personal efficacy can be enhanced through particular sources of information, which include that person's own accomplishments or personal mastery experiences.<sup>18</sup>

Bandura regarded what he called 'mastery experiences' as the most effective way of building a strong sense of efficacy but added the caveat that this required 'experience in overcoming obstacles through perseverant effort.'<sup>19</sup> Both self-defence courses included opportunities for mastery and vicarious experiences in different ways. I have described some of the experiences provided in the self-defence course at School A above. An example from one of Paul's lessons in the self-defence course at School B is captured in this journal entry:

Any questions? Clare calls out 'What if someone has you by the throat? What can you do then? Paul explained to the group that in the situation the danger is that the victim's throat is being squashed. 'The first thing to do is take that pressure off windpipe by dropping your chin down like this [*demonstrates*] and lift your shoulders up like this.' [*demonstrates*]. The room is immediately filled by 25 girls shrugging. 'Then you take your attacker off balance by stepping back with one leg to loosen the grip and then stab your fingers into his throat, like this' [*demonstrates jabbing finger in the air*] Paul asks Jess to grab his throat while he has his back against the wall. Jess puts her hands around his throat. Paul looks at the class: 'What can I do now?' he asks. 'Can I do this? Or this? [*demonstrates*] What about this?' Paul drops his chin, lifts his shoulders up and lifts his right arm to strike diagonally across his body towards Jess with the heel of his palm. He explains that this is a distraction. He leaves his right arm over Jess' arm and brings up his left hand to clasp the right from underneath. He drops his body weight heavily and Jess immediately buckles. The girls cheer. Sophie asks disbelievingly if this could work if the attacker was taller. Paul gets her up to demonstrate on him. It works first time. More cheers.

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277; McCaughey, *Real Knockouts*, above n 14; Jen Tarr, 'Habit and Conscious Control: Ethnography and Embodiment in the Alexander Technique' (2008) 9 *Ethnography* 477.

<sup>17</sup> Albert Bandura and Nancy E Adams, 'Analysis of Self-efficacy Theory of Behavioural Change' (1977) 1(4) *Cognitive Therapy and Research* 287, 288,

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>19</sup> Albert Bandura, (1994). 'Self-Efficacy' in V S Ramachaudran (ed) *Encyclopedia of Human Behavior – Vol 4* (Academic Press, 1994) 71 (Reprinted in H Friedman (ed) *Encyclopedia of Mental Health* (Academic Press, 1998) 2.

The girls at School A were similarly supportive of each other during the more physical activities I have described above, particularly when a participant resisted strongly during the simulated assault scenario. Fraser and Russell found that participants in a Model Mugging course commented on the importance of sharing the experience of vulnerability and the emotional bonding and support found within the group.<sup>20</sup> McCaughey participated in a Model Mugging course during her ethnographic research into women self-defence training and also remarked on the supportive training atmosphere:

...women bond during the ordeal. This mutual support is structured into the class as well ...  
The women connect as they support the one fighting on the mat, yelling for the fighter ...<sup>21</sup>

Participating in group training appears to be instrumental in participants developing a sense of self-empowerment, and feeling a capacity for greater self-assertiveness.<sup>22</sup> Women can also feel more empowered through vicarious mastery experiences.<sup>23</sup> For example, they can be taught by women whom they regard as strong and capable models,<sup>24</sup> or, as I have described in the scenario above, they can learn by watching how others in the group respond.

But there are other issues to consider when teaching adolescents. Robert, the sports-coordinator pointed out that there can be negative repercussions for young people who do not perform well or successfully in front of their peers:

Look, if it's combined with a certain degree of success in what they're doing, yes. I think it can have the opposite repercussion if they're not successful – or don't see themselves as doing well and it could probably flatten their self-esteem to some degree. I think there are some girls in this school here who probably have body image issues – and that can play a big role as well. That's a catch-22 situation, obviously if they're more engaged in physical activity, they've got less chance-it's not the only factor, it's not probably always decisive-less chance of having those problems and yet to get them into that situation, where they're continually involved in physical activity is a challenge as well. Because they're probably aware...body issues.

But can occasional mastery experiences change a person's perceptions about their self abilities? Several studies, whose authors have researched the effectiveness of women's self-defence courses have reported that the women who take part in training experience variously

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<sup>20</sup> Fraser and Russell, above n 7.

<sup>21</sup> McCaughey, *Real Knockouts*, above n 14, 63.

<sup>22</sup> Fraser and Russell, above n 7.

<sup>23</sup> Bandura, 'Self-Efficacy Mechanism in Human Agency', above n 15.

<sup>24</sup> Brecklin, 'Self Defense/Assertiveness Training' above n 7.

increased self-defence self-efficacy and self-confidence,<sup>25</sup> and self-esteem.<sup>26</sup> According to that research, women have also reported that they do not feel as helpless after completing training or as fearful about their safety.<sup>27</sup>

In my research, I asked the girls how they thought about their abilities to protect themselves from a physical threat after self-defence training. The reports were mixed. The young women from School A who had participated in more 'realistic' mastery experiences tended to be more confident about their self-defence abilities than girls at School B. The girls at School A drew on their practical experience in statements such as:

Lou: I think it's like when you go, you bash into those bags, and everyone's like, wow, like, it sort of shows you can- that does actually do something. Like it shows you- it gives you an indication of your strength, and so, I guess it makes you a bit more confident in that situation.

Kathryn: You sort of walk down the street, and you think, oh my gosh, imagine if anything- no, it's ok 'cause I can take them-

Sarah: I was practising self-defence on my friend, who- he's about-just a bit taller than me, he's like 17 and he got me every time 'cause he did-he did this thing where he'd flick my legs and I'd fall on my back so- but I didn't really want to hurt him so I wasn't really fighting back but I felt more confident 'cause I had little manoeuvres so I could get to him in a certain way, it was just 'cause, you know, when I got into position, I didn't want to hurt him, so I'd stop. And then he'd just flick me on the floor. But, yeah. So I feel less - I kind of know what to do a bit, you know- and I was just telling him how you wanted us to- how we can use our bodies more than- like styles that you can use..... like using knees and feet and-yeah. I didn't really want to hurt him so - yeah, knees and feet are the best weapon. 'cause, the first thing, you know, he went for was my hands, to hold my hands back so that's what most people would go for, I think. So your knees... are the best weapon you've got.

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<sup>25</sup> Susan O Michener, *An Analysis of Rape Aggression Defense as a Method of Self-Empowerment for Women*, (D Phil Thesis, Walden University, 1996) 78; Darcy Shannon Cox *An Analysis of Two Forms of Self Defense training and Their Impact on Women's Sense of Personal Safety Self-Efficacy* (D Psych Thesis, Eastern Virginia Medical School Norfolk State University, 1999) 6, 67; Lindsay M. Orchowski, Christine A Gidycz, and Holly Raffle, 'Evaluation of a Sexual Assault Risk Reduction and Self-Defense Program: A Prospective Analysis Of A Revised Protocol' (2008) 32 *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 204.

<sup>26</sup> Michener, above n 25, 78; however see Yumi Akuzawa Foster, 'Brief Aikido Training Versus Karate and Golf Training and University Students' Scores on Self-Esteem, Anxiety, and Expression of Anger' (1997) 84 *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 609.

<sup>27</sup> McCaughey, *Real Knockouts*, above n 14; Elizabeth M Ozer, and Albert Bandura, 'Mechanisms Governing Empowerment Effects: A Self- Efficacy Analysis' (1990) 58 *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 472, 481; McDaniel, 'above n 5, 42; Michener, above n 28, 78.

Five girls at School B thought that they did feel they were not as helpless as they had been. For example:

Emily: Yeah, like I used to get scared when I used to walk and that but now I know that like yeah when I walk at least I know some basic self-defence and stuff. So yeah, it's kind of helped

Caitlyn: But I think I have a little bit more knowledge, like you know.

Jess: Probably, like, a little bit more confident, knowing that you can do something if you're approached-

Kate: It gave me some ideas

Shauna: 'Cause when you watch the guy do it, like, you think you wouldn't be able to do it, coz he's like big and everything, but you can actually do it, if you get the thing right. No, it was good.

However, several of the young women from School B told me they thought that nothing much had changed. Sue, for instance, said that she did not think she would be able to use any of the self-defence skills that she had learned. Melissa and Phoebe expressed similar thoughts:

Melissa: You still kind of look at them the same way you looked at them before, like – they may be stronger than you and stuff like that but they're bigger and stuff

Phoebe: Because if you see a big guy coming to attack you, he's still going to look like a big guy – just walking – you think he's going to attack you even though and the self-defence doesn't really change that

For other students from School B, the training may have even reinforced already well-entrenched feelings of vulnerability and weakness:

Yeah, like, it made me think that I wouldn't want to put myself in that situation. Like, I'm not going to go walk down dark alleys and stuff by myself Like people can attack you. Like, I never really thought about it but because of the classes I've realised that it can actually happen.

Like you realise that it can happen in everyday life and it does happen to people

Yeah, I wouldn't - now I like realise that this is like reality, like, you know, this could happen, so we're learning these moves so you know.

The young women I spoke to who said they had not changed any perceptions about their self-defence abilities or anything of their beliefs in self-capacity told me that this was because they were not confident in their own capabilities. However, they agreed that confidence was an important quality to have in physical activities – especially self-defence.

### **The disposition to confidence**

Several of the girls at both schools had commented on a relationship between self-confidence and sport. A number of them said that they thought that if a person lacked confidence in a particular activity, then this would be likely to influence whether or not he or she wants to participate in that activity. For instance, they said:

It might be because you just might not then want to like play, you might want to stay back and not like get involved because - yeah, it's confidence

And if you say 'I'm going to lose, I'm going to lose', then you're probably going to lose.

'Cause if you're, like, really confident, then you can be a bit more aggressive. If you're not as confident, you can be standing, like, on the side-lines 'here

Most girls described themselves as confident or 'pretty' confident, and only a few respondents indicated that they were either unconfident or 'kind of in the middle.' Several girls told me they thought that confidence and self-esteem were important attributes:

If you've, like, got low self-esteem, you just, like, don't think you can do anything-

Yeah you, obviously, yeah, you think you can't do it.. If you believe you can do it, you do it. That's what they say, yeah? It's true

I think you can, 'cause if you like go out thinking you can do it, you know, I think you could. Yeah.

In the following journal extract, Paul explained to one of the classes that self-confidence was an important quality for self-defence:

Paul asks, 'what is the most important thing about self-defense?' Paul lifts one finger and says, 'One. Safety first' He then lifts a second finger up and says, 'Two. Have confidence in yourself.' He asks, 'how many of you have confidence in yourself?' One or two students call out but most stay silent. Paul asks the students to close their eyes and imagine someone is going

to attack them. He asks them to imagine what they will do in response to that attack. After a few seconds, he tells the students to open their eyes. Paul then asks the students, 'How many of you are safe?' The students call out and it appears that at least half of the class imagine that they were safe. Two claim that they 'got away'. Paul then asks, 'How many of you are not safe?' A few students put up their hand. Paul then asks why aren't they safe? 'What happened?' The girls explained that they were scared and they could not defend themselves. 'I tried but it didn't work'. 'I couldn't get past the attacker' Two students said that they used the monkey grip, and a couple of other students said that they kicked and punched their attacker. Another girl said that she kicked her attacker in the groin. Paul says that if you can imagine beating a person like that and you do [ in your imagination] , then you are building confidence in yourself.

Many of the young women agreed with Paul that confidence was an important aspect of self-defence. The following comments are examples:

Beth: If you don't think you're going to be able to do like something, you're not going to be able to do as well'.

Shauna: Because if you don't have the confidence to do one of the moves on someone, then... then you're gonna get hurt.

Tina: Yep. I think you'd have to be sort of confident if you were going to do it, 'cause if you weren't, you'd sort of just be standing there...just letting them take over 'cause you'd be like, 'should I, oh, I don't want to hurt this person', or something.

Rachel: Because like you'd think that you can do it whereas if you were not like that, you'd think, Oh no I can't do it and then you 'd just become weak and...

Sarah thought that just appearing confident could reduce a person's vulnerability to threat:

I think if you come across as being confident, attackers are less likely to pick you. ....if you come across as being confident, they're less likely to want to have anything to do with you. They'll find someone else.

A number of girls at School B explained however, that they did not feel confident or more capable in self-defence because they often had difficulties mastering certain skills. They gave me a number of reasons for this. First, the girls told me that they were confused about the movements required to execute particular actions:

'It's so technical; it's like, can you turn your finger?'



I don't know but the ones where you have to lock them down, what are you going to do when you're like, holding him? If you do it with, like, two hands or something, you're not going to be able to call the police, or something. You need someone else there, but if someone else was there, then that wouldn't have happened.

Many girls at School B commented on the difficulties they experienced in remembering what they had learned. Common responses were:

I forgot most of it'....

It was hard to remember forgot it and was lost'<sup>28</sup>

I tried to do some but I couldn't really remember

Yeah it was good to learn but yeah going home and actually remembering what we'd learned and it was kind of hard

Bron, Sue and Jenna suggested that they might have remembered how to do the techniques if they had been able begin to mimic the techniques while the instructor was explaining what to do.

Bron: I found it a bit hard. I thought it would have been better if, like, we were in partners and standing up while being instructed, so like we could do it at the same time. Coz when I went back into the partner, I...

Sue: You forgot.

Bron: ...totally...

Jenna: Yeah, me too.

Bron : - forgot it and was lost. But, yeah. You could see that it would work if you did it properly.

These observations also raised the issue of practice.

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## Ephemeral practice

In the course of my interviews and focus groups, I asked the girls about the kinds of things that might have encouraged them to become more confident in their self-defence abilities. They told me that they had found it difficult to put some of the teaching into practice so they never really had an opportunity to learn whether or not this would have worked for them.

Many girls from School B also reported that they did not feel confident because they would be likely to forget what to do or forget to use their self-defence skills at all if they were assaulted. For example:

Like in a situation bit for me, it'd be harder like you'd freeze up – you wouldn't remember which hand to put here

I'd get scared and I wouldn't know what to do. But if it came up, you'd probably forget them

I don't think I'd even be able to use it if I was getting attacked.

[There's].a lot of stuff I wouldn't remember.

I can't be bothered doing all these...

But you wouldn't think of them

Beth agreed. She said that she felt confident when she was practicing the technique in class but thought that she would be likely to freeze and not be able to use the skill anyway. In her words:

I kind of thought like oh, 'cause you know just like the easy things and they grab your shoulder like you would think of like hitting them there or whatever, pulling them over your shoulder, whatever. I kind of thought about that a bit after. I was like, you know, maybe. But then you think at the - when it happens you like freeze up, you know

Sally and Lisa said they found it easier to remember simpler movements and would find it difficult to remember how to do the more complicated actions they had learned.

Sally: They're pretty like...there's the hard and tricky ones, they're like you have to practice a hundred times to know, but then there's like little ones, like the one where he like

pulls your arm down, that's like so tricky, but then the ones, what was it, like yeah, you just like knee them and pull them over...

Lisa: Yeah.

Sally: ...that one's pretty easy. But like the little...

Lisa: But you wouldn't think of them. Like...you wouldn't like...you would never...

Sally: You wouldn't think, 'Now I pull her finger up...' and...

Lisa: ...and you're like...like just like fling your hand out...but you wouldn't really think that...

There were certain strategies and pieces of information that the girls remembered more than others. For example, girls at School B remembered Paul's rule about 'hard weapons' and 'soft targets' on the human body, which is described above. I recorded the following observation in one lesson:

Paul asks, 'Can you remember all this?'

'No' the class answers almost with one voice.

Paul asks, 'can you remember soft target hard weapon?'

'Yes!'

The girls referred to Paul's message about hard weapons and soft targets in several interviews, for example:

Beth: Well, there was kind of just like little things that just stuck in my mind, not - not so much the techniques but, like, to put them off balance: hard weapon, soft target, just things that you could kind of move on.

Sarah: Oh I know, hit soft spots, hard targets.

Phoebe: I remember that, that was good.

Jess: Yeah, if I was in a situation, I wouldn't like remember what he taught me, that would like go, but the idea of hitting the soft spots, like the eyes and the nose and stuff.

Other girls commented that the rule was 'useful' and 'easy to remember'. Girls at both schools tended to remember other techniques because they were easy or more memorable for

other reasons. One particularly popular technique was throwing an opponent. Powerful movements such as take-downs and throws require a coordinated whole-of-body effort, which Young has suggested is one experience often missing from women's bodily experience.<sup>29</sup> However, these were the skills that most students found easiest to learn at both Schools. For instance, Lou said:

...it's 'good to use 'cause it's really easy' 'Cause when you watch the guy do it, like, you think you wouldn't be able to do it, 'cause he's like big and everything, but you can actually do it, if you get the flip right. No, it was good. I liked the flippy one. Where you flip people over Yeah, I liked the one where they're going to punch you, and you get them on the floor. That's my favourite.

Lou commented that this made her feel 'strong and powerful.'

Paul also labeled certain techniques or aspects of techniques with catchy or memorable names that described the action taking place. For example, capturing an attacker's arm in one situation was described as 'seat belts on'. In this technique, the arm of the attacker, who is positioned behind the attacker, is draped over the shoulder of the victim and 'locked' into place.

Only Shauna and Karin thought the lessons were too repetitive:

Shauna: It's a good change but it's a bit repetitive, like

Karin: Yeah

Shauna: After just doing, sitting down, watching, going back to trying and sitting down together

Karin: Yeah

Shauna: Going back to trying ...like if you do weeks, like, in a row kind of thing ... boring but yeah, it's good.

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<sup>29</sup> Iris Marion Young, *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory* (Indiana University Press, 1990).

## New practices versus old habits

The girls also explained that they had not practised the techniques enough to be familiar with them. Several writers have recommended that self-defence courses should provide opportunities for students to practice and perfect a range of self-defence strategies.<sup>30</sup> Madden and Sokol in particular stressed that self-defence courses should plan to include sufficient class time to repeat scenarios that students have found difficult.<sup>31</sup>

However, Melissa and Phoebe participated in one lesson in which they learned seventeen different techniques. They said they found it difficult to remember what they had done because they did not have enough time to practice.

I don't think we got enough time to like actually polish off each little bit . 'Cause we did it for like two, like, two minutes and then I forgot it the next week, 'cause we didn't do it long enough.

Most girls acknowledged that they needed to practice the skills they had learned, for example:

They're pretty like ... there's the hard and tricky ones, they're like you have to practice a hundred times to know,

So if you practice a bit more, you'd probably get it going I think it's something that you have to kind of practice

In the spirit of this, the girls sometimes reported back to Paul that they had practiced their new skills at home or with friends. But they said it was difficult to practice what they had learned with family and friends because they did not want to hurt the other person. In Karin's words:

I was practising self-defence on my friend, who ... he's about ... just a bit taller than me, he's like seventeen and he got me every time 'cause he did-he did this thing where he'd flick my legs and I'd fall on my back so- but I didn't really want to hurt him so I wasn't really fighting back but I felt more confident 'cause I had little maneuvers so I could get to him in a certain way, it was just 'cause, you know, when I got into position, I didn't want to hurt him, so I'd

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<sup>30</sup>Carol Harding and Joan Nelson, 'Educating for Self-Defense: Information and Physical Strategies Can Protect Women and Children Against Violent Attack' (1985) 57 *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance* 112, 112-113; Nina Cummings, 'Self-Defense Training For College Women' (1992) 40 *Journal of American College Health*, 185.

<sup>31</sup> Madden and Sokol, above n 6, 142.

stop. And then he'd just flick me on the floor. But, yeah. So I feel less-less-I kind of know what to do a bit, you know

Two students said that they felt that that they might not be all that comfortable trying the techniques on another person other than a friend or practice partner:

Shauna: It felt ... It felt alright 'cause we knew the people, so ...

Beth: Yeah. I don't know how I'd do that if was someone else, though

Girls at both schools also tended to be gentle and considerate with each other when they practiced in pairs. For example, I noted the following experiences in my journal:

Hayley accidentally punches her partner, Jodie on the arm. Even though the contact is very slight, Sarah still rubs Jodie's arm and says, 'I'm so sorry.'

Soula and Mia are wrestling amongst the last eight student who have survived the eliminations for 'Last man kneeling' Soula tries one of the movement we've been working on and manages to slam Mia heavily to the ground. Immediately, 'Oh God, I'm so sorry! Sorry, sorry, sorry. Are you ok?

This reticence is reflected in comments by Madden and Sokol who observed that women tend not to practice the relevant physical moves using all their force in case they hurt their practice partners.<sup>32</sup> They observed that this could well result in an incorrect technique being practiced and suggested that female students should not practice on each other for that reason. Sometimes, the girls either did not practice or else avoided practicing actions according to their instructions because they believed that what they were doing was painful or else were concerned about hurting their partner. This is reflected in another of my journal notes:

This couple are really quite hesitant about being hurt. 'It will hurt me'! One gently pushes her partner, who slowly falls backwards in a rear break fall and stays there. The girls really don't want to practice falling backwards as the floors are quite hard.<sup>33</sup>

Sally and Lisa also told me:

Sally: A lot of the locks – like actually were painful ...

Lisa: Can't do that - it like really hurts

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<sup>32</sup> Madden and Sokol, 'above n 6, 137.

<sup>33</sup> A rear break fall is a method of falling safely. The person falling tucks in his or her chin to reduce the risk of a head injury and sometimes completes the fall in a backwards somersault.

Young has argued that women's 'attention is often divided between the aim to be realized in motion and the body that must accomplish it, while at the same time saving itself from harm.'<sup>34</sup> At both schools, girls who were initially hesitant, participated with gusto once they understood that they could accomplish the necessary actions without hurting themselves. For example, Paul taught the girls how to defend themselves from a prone position in the last lesson for each group, which involved the girls falling or being pushed to the floor. Paul used padded mats in three or four groups when those were available, but most of these lessons were held in the gymnasium foyer, which was carpeted. Initially, a number were reluctant to fall unto the carpeted surface of the foyer. However as I noted at the time in my journal:

But once they get the hang of it, most don't mind falling backwards. The girls are far more animated now that they realise that if they do the technique properly, they won't really hurt themselves. ... 'Push me!' one girl announces to the next group. Whee!

There are bodies falling everywhere onto the hard carpeted floor – but no complaints but lots of shrieking.

Carly explained why she thought it was important for girls to have this kind of physical experience:

But, like, I reckon like- kids who have, like, sisters and brothers, who fight, -like, together, like, physically - I reckon they have a more chance to get away. 'Cause like-and especially if someone grabs you, 'cause you're-you're used to being hurt. Or if someone does something, you're used to it. 'Cause if I get kicked or something, I don't care 'cause I'm used to it. Like, I don't care 'cause I'm used to it. And so I reckon I won't be as shocked, I won't be-like shocked.

### **Self-defence training as a transformative force**

As I have noted in the discussion above, many of the young women reported that they had insufficient time to practice and learn the new skills during lessons. They also reported that they forgot many of the movements after leaving class, and had found many of the actions too complex for them to mimic effectively. As a result, any dispositions of competency, capability, strength, and power, which they periodically demonstrated during classes were temporary or illusory. In order for new dispositions such as these to endure and/or replace

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<sup>34</sup> Young, *Throwing Like a Girl*, above n 29, 146.

earlier, contradictory dispositions in a Bourdudian understanding of *habitus*, the new dispositions must be habituated until they become pre-conscious and automatic.<sup>35</sup>

Crossley and Spencer have suggested that this process of habituation occurs through repeated practice. For instance, Crossley's circuit trainer and Spencer's mixed martial artist acquired their respective *habitus* through reflexive body techniques that were incorporated over time and with a good deal of practice and repetition. Spencer insisted that 'body techniques and reflexive body techniques are central in identity formation'. In his words:

We posit a self in and through learning and conducting RBTs. They give bodies a particular character and are reflected in recognizable bodily dispositions. The training, then, integral to MMA, moulds the bodies of the fighters, significantly impinging on how they see themselves and how their identities are reflected to those within and outside of the MMA community.<sup>36</sup>

Spencer and Wacquant have also pointed to the intense practice required to acquire the identities of fighters.<sup>37</sup> Spencer, in particular, noted that mixed martial artists practised in order for their skills to become pre-reflective and enduring because fighters must rely on their bodies' intuitive response 'in battle' based on the 'body techniques learned in training'.<sup>38</sup> These new techniques or skills are incorporated through repetition. He regarded repetition as critical to incorporating the new technique or skill because this is how the technique is mastered and added to the body's 'technical corpus' and, as a result, the *habitus* of the fighter is continually 'formed and reformed'.<sup>39</sup>

As I indicated above, a number of the young women I spoke to were aware that they had not done sufficient practice and repetition to add new skills and techniques to their bodies' 'technical corpus' and, as a result, felt differently about their physical capabilities. Three girls thought that the courses were too short to learn 'real' self-defence and suggested that they would be better off learning martial arts, where they would acquire skills over a longer period of time. For example, Caitlyn said:

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<sup>35</sup> Loïc Wacquant, 'Towards a Reflexive Sociology: a Workshop with Pierre Bourdieu' (1989) 7 (1) *Sociological Theory* 26, 45.

<sup>36</sup> Spencer, above n 16, 135.

<sup>37</sup> Loïc Wacquant, 'The Prizefighter's Three Bodies' (1998) 63(3) *Ethnos* 325 Loïc Wacquant, 'Pugs at Work: Bodily Capital and Bodily Labour among Professional Boxers' (1995) 1 *Body and Society* 65; Spencer, above n 16.

<sup>38</sup> Spencer, above n 16, 129.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid* 127.



I still wouldn't react good, I don't think. Like - if I actually joined a course or something, but not after just the four lessons. Nah. Because all we've done is really like slow motion stuff, not-nothing full-on, so-just if you're-yeah, a girl, I don't think especially, would go very well. Nah.

Caitlyn's concern reflects debate about the best form of self-defence training for women. Repetition is a key aspect of martial arts training. However, several writers have pointed out that the martial arts are not necessarily suitable in general for teaching women self-defence skills.<sup>40</sup>

There are several reasons for this. Firstly, martial arts training involves learning extensive systemized methods of combat. This means that most martial arts are studied over long periods of time and it will usually be several years before students develop the necessary competencies in the art.<sup>41</sup> Second, many martial arts are also based on traditional forms, so techniques are generally based around men's experience of combat, which may not always be appropriate for women and women's needs.<sup>42</sup> In this respect, most martial arts schools are co-gendered, which might inhibit some women from participating because, for example, they are embarrassed about their own physical competencies or fear that they might get hurt.<sup>43</sup>

Thirdly, most martial arts schools emphasise discipline, control, and respect for other students, which may simply end up confirming the gendered dispositions of women's *habitus*, such as the expectation that women ought to take other people into consideration or the idea that aggression should always be controlled. As a result, Madden suggested that women in martial arts classes:

... may learn that they should not use karate unless they are absolutely certain their lives are at stake. They may also feel clumsy, weak and emotionally distraught if being physically aggressive is novel. Hence, they may feel less willing or able to defend themselves after the course than before.<sup>44</sup>

Madden has even suggested that martial arts classes may 'make people feel *less* able to defend themselves' because instructors emphasise the need for expertise in using techniques

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<sup>40</sup> Vernon L. Quinsey and Douglas Upfold, 'Rape Completion and Victim Injury as a Function of Female Resistance Strategy' (1985) 17 *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science* 40; Madden and Sokol, above n 6; Leanne R Brecklin, *Self Defense/Assertiveness Training and Women's Responses to Rape Attacks*, (D Psych Thesis, University of Illinois, 2002; McCaughey, *Real Knockouts*, above n 14.

<sup>41</sup> McCaughey, *Real Knockouts*, above n 14.

<sup>42</sup> McCaughey, *ibid*.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid* 79.

<sup>44</sup> Margaret E Madden, 'Perceived Vulnerability and Control of Martial Arts and Physical Education Students' (1995) 80 *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 899, 907.

effectively.<sup>45</sup> Madden, who researched feelings of vulnerability in martial arts students, found that these feelings diminished over time. This suggests that participants need to develop a ‘feel for the game’ over a lengthy period of time before they experience any positive effects of martial arts training on their own self-defence competency.

Finally, women who are drawn to martial arts may already have what Mennesson described as a ‘competitive sport *habitus*’<sup>46</sup>: that is, they may be inclined towards competitive, physical activities because of their sporting and other physical experiences in adolescence. The ‘hard’ boxers<sup>47</sup> in Mennesson’s study did not fear receiving blows, enjoyed using their fists, and valued efficacy and aggression over aesthetics.<sup>48</sup> These boxers felt ‘at home’ in the field.

Robert, however suggested that the self-defence course could prompt the girls to think about further training:

Robert: I think it opens up some doors. It probably gets them thinking, and for some of them it might even be motivation to continue with it. I have heard some of the girls ...speak to Ravi about continuing with the self-defence, so, I think that in itself is a positive thing, even if they only had one or two classes, it certainly gives them a bit of food for thought, maybe drive them to become more involved or to look at it a little bit more of a serious level.

Some girls agreed that more training would be beneficial. Participants at both schools also inquired about continuing with some form of martial arts after their training ended. Beth, for example, suggested holding the course every year: ‘like, you know, start in Year 7, you get better and better, and better, and that way you can practice more ...’

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid 906.

<sup>46</sup> Christine Mennesson , ‘ “Hard” Women and “Soft” Women : The Social Construction of Identities among Female Boxers’ (2000) 35 *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 21, 25.

<sup>47</sup> Kick boxers, English boxers and Thai boxers.

<sup>48</sup> Mennesson, above n 46, 27.

## Conclusion

I have used Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* to explore both how women come to embody their identities as well as examine the possibilities of transforming aspects of those identities in which women frame themselves as weak and vulnerable. I have discussed how some writers have been concerned about inferences of determinism in Bourdieu's work<sup>49</sup> while others, such as McNay<sup>50</sup> and Sweetman,<sup>51</sup> have argued that his work 'corrects' an over-emphasis in other theories of identity on the potential for individuals to change.<sup>52</sup>

In response, Bourdieu, impatient with criticisms of determinism, emphasised the generative nature of *habitus*. For Bourdieu, the *habitus* is both infinite and limited. It is infinite because it will change as it encounters and adjusts to new situations but it is limited because the *habitus* always marks the boundaries of transformation. Individuals are capable of improvisation to address disjunctures between the expectations of the *habitus* and the situations that individuals actually encounter, which is why the *habitus* is also a generative structure.<sup>53</sup>

It also appears clear that Bourdieu did allow in several works for the possibility of reflexivity and change.<sup>54</sup> However, there are ambiguities in his work. Bourdieu insisted that the dispositions of *habitus* 'cannot be touched by voluntary, deliberate transformation'<sup>55</sup> but equally acknowledged that people can change their practices, movements, and behaviours through some form of training, such as the 'charm schools' he briefly referred to in *Distinction*<sup>56</sup> or the 'total institutions' referred to in *Reproduction*.<sup>57</sup>

Bourdieu did not, however, provide any guide in his work about how this change occurs. Accordingly, I have used Bandura's work on self-efficacy to address these uncertainties in Bourdieu's framework. I used the design of two self-defence courses to explore the

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<sup>49</sup> Chris Shilling, 'Physical Capital and Situated Action: A New Direction for Corporeal Sociology' (2004) 25(4) *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 473; Richard Jenkins, 'Pierre Bourdieu and the Reproduction of Determinism' (1982) 16(2) *Sociology* 270.

<sup>50</sup> Lois McNay, 'Gender, Habitus and the Field' (1999) 16 *Theory, Culture and Society* 95.

<sup>51</sup> Paul Sweetman, 'Twenty-first Century Dis-ease? Habitual Reflexivity or the Reflexive Habitus' (2003) 51(4) *Sociological Review* 528.

<sup>52</sup> McNay, above n 50, 113.

<sup>53</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford University Press, 1990) 55.

<sup>54</sup> Eg Pierre Bourdieu, *State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power* (Stanford University Press 1998); Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* above n 57; see also Sweetman, above n 55.

<sup>55</sup> Bourdieu, *An Outline of a Theory of Practice*, above n 3, 94.

<sup>56</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Harvard University Press, 1984) 206.

<sup>57</sup> Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (Sage, 2000) 44.

possibilities of changing those aspects of women's gendered identity through a specific training process. This process provided the participants with opportunities for mastery and vicarious experiences, which Bandura has argued can enhance self-efficacy,<sup>58</sup> and thereby change or re-form that aspect of a person's identity.

In this chapter, I have shown that some of the self-defence participants appeared to acquire new, albeit temporary, dispositions, which challenged pre-existing dispositions of vulnerability, weakness, and physical timidity through brief mastery experiences. The majority however, did not experience any significant changes, citing the lack of practice and the complexity of the material to be learned as reasons why they were no more confident in their self-defence capabilities than when they started. The difference between these two outcomes points to the nature of the training, the durability of those earlier dispositions, and the individuality of *habitus*.

As McNay pointed out, one of the values of Bourdieu's work lies in the explanation his concepts offer for the immanence and durability of gendered identities.<sup>59</sup> There is no doubt that people can change the ways that they talk, walk and position themselves – through the services of voice coaches, grooming, and deportment classes, for example – but this does not mean that either reflexivity or change are automatic responses to training. Firstly, it would seem that training must be intended to generate durable changes if it is intended to generate new or replacement dispositions, which are unlikely to be accomplished through temporary or transient practices. Also, the capacity for reflexivity may simply mean that people recognise that they are unable to change even if an opportunity to change is presented to them. Finally, people simply may not want to change, even when they are offered the opportunity to do so.

On this point, Mills and Gate have made an intriguing suggestion that there are two kinds of *habitus*: reproductive and transformative.<sup>60</sup> People who have a reproductive *habitus* recognise the 'constraint of social conditions and conditioning and tend to read the future that fits them'.<sup>61</sup> People who have a transformative *habitus*, however, recognise the possibilities for improvisation and, therefore, transformation. 'Their *sens du jeu*, or 'feel for the game', allows

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<sup>58</sup> Bandura, 'Self-Efficacy Mechanism in Human Agency', above n 14.

<sup>59</sup> McNay, above n 50, 103.

<sup>60</sup> Carmen Mills and Trevor Gale, 'Assuming an Alias: Revealing Student Identities in Schooling' (Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education Annual Conference, Brisbane, 2002) <http://www.aare.edu.au/02pap/mil02540.htm>; Carmen Mills and Trevor Gale, *Schooling in Disadvantaged Communities: Playing the Game From the Back of the Field* (Springer, 2009).

<sup>61</sup> Mills and Gale, *Schooling in Disadvantaged Communities*, above n 60, 101.

their *habitus* to generate strategies that are adapted to an endless number of possible situations'.<sup>62</sup>

Mills and Gale argued that reproductive and transformative *habitus* are 'the products of opportunities and constraints framing the individual's earlier life experiences'<sup>63</sup> and so both are 'potentials' within each person.<sup>64</sup> Mills suggested, for example, that schools could become places of transformation for disadvantaged students by re-evaluating and adjusting curricula and learning environments.<sup>65</sup> This suggests that a pedagogic practice is key; a practice which can best promote opportunities for the transformative potential of individuals to surface. As Bourdieu pointed out:

The social world is, to a large extent, what the agents make of it, at each moment; but they have no chance of unmaking it and re-making it except on the basis of realistic knowledge of what it is and what they can do from the position they occupy within it<sup>66</sup>

In summary, it appears that bodily re-education through self-defence training might offer a way of changing certain aspects of women's gendered *habitus*, but a great deal more work is needed to determine the kind of pedagogic practice that could best enable women to take advantage of the opportunities offered.

In the following chapter, I reach some conclusions in relation to my research questions and offer some suggestions for future research.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid 98.

<sup>63</sup> Diane Reay, '“They Employ Cleaners to Do That”: Habitus in the Primary Classroom' (1995) 16 (3) *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 353, 355 cited in Mills and Gale, above n 60, 101.

<sup>64</sup> Mills and Gale *Schooling in Disadvantaged Communities*, above n 60, 101

<sup>65</sup> Carmel Mills, 'Reproduction and Transformation in Disadvantaged Communities: A Bourdieuan Perspective on Improving the Educational Outcomes of Students' <http://www.aare.edu.au/05pap/mil05061.pdf>; Carmen Mills, 'Reproduction and transformation of Inequalities in Schooling: the Transformative Potential of the Theoretical Constructs of Bourdieu' (2008) 29(1) *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 79.

<sup>66</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups' (1985) 14 *Theory and Society* 723.

## CONCLUSION

I began my research with a puzzle. For most of my life, it was simply normal and ‘natural’ for me to experience my body as weak, vulnerable, and physically incapable in so many different contexts. Yet, on one occasion, I experienced a momentary transformation into the form of a strong, powerful physical aggressor. Why did I experience that transformation and how was it possible to change my identity in this way? I have attempted to address that puzzle in my research through three key research questions. These were:

Why do women’s self- portraits as passive, physically weak, vulnerable, and defensive feel so natural? What light can categories like ‘identity’, and ‘gendered habitus’ shed on these aspects of women’s experience?

To what extent is women’s gendered identity as female/feminine an embodied phenomenon? How do girls and women embody their identities?

Can the embodied aspects of women’s gendered identity as female/feminine be transformed by purposive pedagogic projects such as self-defence training?

### Gendered Habitus

As I discussed earlier in my thesis, I have drawn on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, particularly his concepts of habitus and practice to understand why women’s conceptions of those aspects of their identity that relate to vulnerability, passivity and weakness feel so natural. In Bourdieu’s framework, these ways of being feel like second nature because they are the result of a gendered *habitus*. That is to say, women’s gendered identity emerges from the embodiment of social structures, which are continually reproduced or regenerated through practice in different social fields until they become habitual and second nature. The gendered habitus is, therefore, an embodied history of gendered relations, which begins in early socialisation.

## **Embodiment of identity**

Guided by Bandura's work on self-efficacy<sup>67</sup>, I used the design of two self-defence courses delivered by myself and a different instructor to girls at two secondary girls schools, to explore my research questions. These schools are referred to in my thesis as School A and School B. Both training courses included a few similar activities but the pedagogic approaches of the instructors were different. In general, the course at School A included more realistic simulations and opportunities for aggressive physical practice than the course at School B.

Using observation, including observation as an instructor, and my interviews with the young women in my research, I showed that many of the girls had acquired an understanding of their bodies as weak, vulnerable, and less robust than boys through strongly gendered habituses. For the majority of these young women, their gendered habitus significantly influenced how they thought about their own safety, the kinds of things they were scared of, and the kinds of protective behaviours they thought they needed to engage in in order to feel safe. Could these aspects of their identity be changed as a result of self-defence training?

## **The potential for transformation**

It appears that there is some potential for women to temporarily change aspects of their identity through self-defence training, but the duration of these changes, and how these changes occur, is uncertain. I showed that while most of the young women in my research did not experience any significant changes after participating in the two self-defence courses, a small number appeared to have acquired momentary dispositions of empowerment and capability as a result of brief mastery experiences during their training. These experiences were more pronounced in the self-defence course at School A, which suggests that self-defence training models should explore opportunities for women to practice their skills in realistic simulations.

Further, my findings suggest that although self-defence training might offer women an opportunity for transformation, albeit a transient transformation, not every woman will take advantage of those opportunities. This may be the result of particularly durable, gendered

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<sup>67</sup> See discussion in Chapter Three

*habitus*, which means that some women might not recognise that the opportunity for change exists. Other women may prefer to stay the way they are, or need a different kind of bodily re-education. The young women at School B who experienced little or no change commented on the lack of practice, the short-term nature of the training, and the complexity of many of the physical movements required to execute particular skills.

### **Contribution of research**

My thesis is an original contribution to literature on gendered embodiment and the possibility of change in that I have examined whether the specific physical practice of self-defence training can change certain aspects of women's gendered identity. In particular, my thesis adds to the very small body of research illustrating how individual *habitus* can be changed.

Further, my thesis adds a new dimension to the extensive research around women's susceptibility to sexual assault, their use of public space, and their responses to threat. My thesis also makes a novel contribution to the scant literature on pedagogical approaches to teaching self-defence to women. I hope also that my thesis adds to existing research exploring the empirical possibilities of Bourdieu's framework.

### **Limitations and suggestions for future research**

My research was limited to two self-defence courses delivered by different instructors in the restricted setting of Catholic girls' secondary schools. My findings suggest that further research of other models of self-defence training for women is necessary. In particular, it would be valuable to explore courses of different durations, different teaching practices but also courses delivered to women of different ages. The gendered *habitus* intensifies with age as we progressively internalise, and continually reproduce our experiences. This suggests that it is likely to be increasingly more difficult to change aspects of our identity as we age.

Other suggestions for research include the potential of martial arts courses as well as gender neutral sports that involve physical contact such as hockey, soccer and handball to provide opportunities for women to transform aspects of their identity that relate to feelings of weakness and vulnerability. Further research might also consider the possibilities of developing relevant self-defence curricula that address gendered aspects of women's identity



that may place them at risk in threatening situations.

Other research should also continue to explore the possibilities of the application of Bourdieu's conceptual framework for developing theories about the body, and the prospects for change.

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### Appendix A Self defence course structure at School A

WEEK	ACTIVITY	1	2	3	4
1	Warm up and introduction				
	Aerobic impact warm up				

	Game: Poison ball				
	Impact with pads: backfist, side palm heel, knee strike and groin strike				
	Impact Drill with the 4 strikes				
	Game: 'Gladiators' (impact pads)				
	Cool down and discussion				
2	Warm up				
	Game: 'Listening'				
	Impact: front palm heel, front elbow, rear elbow and stab kick				
	Game: 'The last man standing'				
	Grab 1. arm over single				
	Grab 2. arm over double				
	1. two hand grab				
	2. single arm rear (backfist) (with focus mitt)				
	Cool down				
3	Warm up and aerobic floor warm up				
	Grabs 1. cross over				
	2. weave				
	3. one arm pull				
	4. hair grab				
	Game: Wrestling competition				
	Cool down				
4	Warm up				
	Floor techniques:				
	1. straddle position				
	2. guard position				
	3. face down				
	4. Chest pin				
	Game, '2's, 3's 4's'				
	Tripping				
	Cool down				
5	Warm up				
	Game: rubber knives				
	Knife attacks				
	1. forehand slash				
	2. backhand slash				
	3. disarm				
	4. wrist lock/take down				
	Game: The 'Gauntlet'- time trial and full contact				
	cool down and discussion				

## Appendix B Sample classes from School B

### Week 1

Warm up

## Discussion- hard and soft targets

### Techniques

1. A grabs V by the throat with both hands. To release pressure on the windpipe, V should drop her chin and lift her shoulders up, then step back and make A fall off balance. V moves forward and then strikes A in the sternum with a finger. V then brings up the same arm (same side), and use her elbow to push A's arm across.
2. V has her back to the wall. This is a two handed throat grab. V then uses the monkey grip defence. The underside of V's forearms hit A's elbows. V then follows up the monkey grip release with an elbow strike.
3. Using the same side arm as A's choke arm [ ie RH to LH), elbow over elbow, V pushes down to bring A in closer and off balance. The other elbow or front elbow is used to strike A's head and then push A off balance.
4. Side shoulder grab 1. V weaves her arm under and then over A's arm, grabbing the arm to lock it up.
5. Side shoulder grab 2. V grabs A with her other hand first to lock the arm into position, which is on the same side as A's grab hand, comes from underneath to roll over the elbow, bending A forward..
6. Rear shoulder grab. A grabs V's shoulder from behind. One arm is raised. V then shifts back the leg that is on the same side as the raised arm and pivots towards A using the raised arm to knock A's arm out of the way.
7. A's hand is outstretched. V then places her thumb over A's hand, fingers pointing in the same direction as A's fingers. V then turn A's hand so that it is locked against the elbow and then presses backwards.
8. V applies the lock on the opposite side as A's hand –RH to RH.
9. Block punch and use two wrist locks: take hand out to the side by rotating out against the elbow joint and then apply the lock.
10. Block the punch with the opposite arm (RH to RH) and then apply the lock.
11. Side lock. A's hand is outstretched. V's opposite hand ( RH to RH) slides into the gap between A' thumb and fingers. V then runs A's hand onto its side, locking the elbow and then forces the hand back against the wrist, using the other hand to assist.
12. Practice punching and blocking
13. A punches V's chin who blocks with an inside out block and then strikes with a palm heel toward the face. V then takes A off balance by grabbing the blocked hand, pushing it down and across the body, which is to enable V to escape
14. A punches towards V's head who this time, steps out and uses an outside block. V strikes with palm heel to head and knee to groin and then grabs A's shoulder (same shoulder as blocking hand) to pull A off balance.

Questions  
Cool down

## **Week 2**

Warm up  
Discussion

1. A punches V and V blocks outside in, grabs A's wrist and then rotates out for a wrist lock. Pressure is applied to the wrist to take A to the ground.
2. opposite hand wrist locks with take down; apply pressure to the wrist to force to the ground.
3. Headlock from the rear . One hand then is placed on A's hand and the other moves to A's elbow. V pushes A's elbow towards his/her body to create more breathing space. Then take the attacker off balance by using their backside to break the attacker's balance.
4. V is lying on her back straddled by the attacker who grabs her arms. Work knee in and then rotate the hips to throw the attacker off.
5. Hip throw from behind.
6. Side head lock, V places one knee behind A- knee into knee. V bends her knees and then drops down to force A to lean backwards. The hand closest to A's body grabs A's hand and pulls it backward and behind as V's head drops under the head lock. In this way V's hand pulls the headlock hand away and downwards.
7. A grabs V's upturned wrists and rotates A's arms outward. V then uses one of the hands grabbed to hit A's other hand by crossing her arms
8. A grabs V's wrist on its side. V reciprocates and pulls A towards V. and pulls A to the ground
9. V and A are side by side. A has an outstretched hand. V's arm goes underneath A's arm. V's hand moves under A's arm and then over A's hand. V grabs A's hand and then forces A's arm to bend and pulls the arm back into A/V's bodies. The arm is locked to the body with the elbow.

Discussion  
Cool Down

## **Week 3**

Warm up  
Discussion:



1. Choke from the front: A has both hands at the V's throat. V drops her chin, raises the shoulder, shifts a leg backwards and then with one arm, block and push the choke across.
2. V has her back to the wall and A has V by the throat. V drops upper elbow down to release the grip.
3. A uses one hand to grasp V's throat. V uses the arm that is on the same side as the attacker's grabbing hand ( ' same side'). V places her hand in A's elbow joint and press down. V strikes A's head with her opposite elbow, and pushes him away.
4. Choke hold from behind. A uses both hand for the grab. V stomps on the attackers foot or kick backwards as a distraction of a ' softener' and then protects her windpipe by lowering her head and lifting her shoulders. One arm is then raised upright, V pivots towards A and uses her elbow to push A out of the way and follow up with a palm heel strike.
5. A places V in a head lock
6. A attacks V with a punch. V has her hands up. Inside out and outside in arm block + punch
7. V places hand over A's hand- thumb is aligned on the back of A's hand- pointing in the same direction as A's fingers. Using this grip, V then rotates A's hand around, against the wrist. For this technique, the wrist is rotated outwards as the arm V is using is on the same side as A's. ( A's LH and V's RH)
8. Punch A to V's stomach, however the focus is using a wrist lock. The lock is applied by using the opposite hand
9. Side lock V uses the diagonally opposite hand to grab A's hand (RH to RH). V grabs A's hand between thumb and fingers and locks, thumb to thumb. V rotates A's arm so that the arm is placed on its side and then pulls the hand in. Pressure is placed on the elbow. V's thumb slides straight into the A created by A's thumb and fingers. The other hand is then brought up and grabs the first hand. A's hand is pressed back against A's body. This yanks A's arm down against the wrist lock.

Discussion  
Cool down

## Week 4

Warm up  
Discussion

1. V faces one opponent- strikes with palm heel to head, palm heel to chest and knee strike and then moves backwards to A2 to elbow strike stomach, open hand to groin(palm heel) and back fist to face.
2. A2 grabs V from behind. The other attacker A1 is in front. V strikes A1 with kick to the groin, then pushes buttocks into A2, back fist to head and groin strike.
3. V is confronted by 3 attackers who are dispersed around her. V moves behind the attackers- by sliding backwards so that all attackers are in frontal view, in front of V.
4. V is facing A1 and A2. A1 punches V with a front punch; V deflects the punch and pushes A1 into the path of A2
5. V is facing A1 and A2. A1 punches V. V blocks the punch and deflects across her body. V then strikes with a palm heel to A1's face, knee to the groin and then pushes A1 away . A2 then punches V who has turned to face A2) and V blocks with inside out with inside out block. V strikes 2 with palm heel to face, knee to the groin and the pushes A2 away by pulling A1's shoulder across.
6. A grabs V's hair from the back. V places both hands on A's hands. V slides back and sideways and strikes with a rear elbow to A's stomach. V then turns into the attacker, bending low and turning A's arm against itself as she does so. (pressure on the elbow- hand locked in an upward position )
7. A attacks V by grabbing V's throat/ A attacks V by grabbing V by the arms. V slides feet to one side. The instructor tells the girls that they can put A off balance by stepping backwards or by crossing A's arms, elbow over elbow.
8. A grabs V's hand- on the same side (RH grabbing LH). V then grabs A's arms and pulls back, shifting weight backward
9. A grabs V's arms from behind, pulling them out behind V. V strikes with a back heel strike to V's knee and then moves sideways to put A off balance.
10. Shoulder grab
11. Double arm grab from the front
12. Single arm grab

**Other attacks ( 10, 11, 12):** A grabs V's shoulder; double arm grab from the front; single arm grab.

Questions  
Cool down

## **Appendix C Journal Extract**

I arrive at the school and remember to find the school office to obtain a visitor's identification tag. The office is close to the street. I introduce myself to the assistant in the office and remember that I have to produce the results of a police search before I can begin the research. The receptionist calls for the principal's secretary or assistant who comes out into the lobby. I explain why I am at the school and after taking a photocopy of the police check, stamps and signs the copy. I then collect my visitors' tag, which is like a pendant and has a strap to hang over my neck. I find this more convenient than tags in other schools, which have usually been clip on badges or pinned badges. Presuming that the self-defence course will be held over the road in the school basketball stadium, I leave the grounds and walk around to the sports grounds on the other side of the school.

The gym or basketball court is located in sports grounds across the road from the main school buildings. This is a fairly new building. I remember that it had only been completed the year before my first year of teaching at this school. The grounds surrounding the gym have been improved substantially in that time. The land size is fairly large. Other than a supermarket at one end, the ground takes up most of the block. There are two tennis courts located in a dip on the left hand side behind the basketball complex. Starting level with the upper level of the basketball complex and running the width of the block is a small but well laid out soccer/hockey field. The grass is in remarkable condition. As it sits higher than the tennis courts, this suggests that a fairly good drainage system has been put in place.

Entry into the basketball complex is on two levels: several doors at the rear of the building and two sets of doors into the foyer of the upper level, which is directly opposite the school crossing. Entry is usually by the rear through double doors close to the side of the building. There is a covered ramp running the width of the building down to these doors. Two class rooms that are located on the upper level of the building look out onto this walkway. Just before the double doors, there is storage for a number of bicycles in a low, narrow room created in the space under the class rooms. There is also storage for equipment such as hurdles and nets.

Inside the building there is a lower level basketball court and a second level running three sides of the court. At the lower level, there is ample storage behind three roller doors on one side the court for equipment such as gym mats, gym horses, tennis racquets, different types of balls, e.g. soft balls for contact games, basketballs, soccer balls, net balls, tennis balls, footballs etc. There are three sets of stairs, although only two are usually used. One set of

stairs leads to the upper foyer of the building and rooms that are used by the staff and for the different function that might be held up in the foyer. The second set of stairs leads to the upper level gym area and also allows access to the class rooms. Access to the class rooms is also possible through the foyer.

On the lower level, on the same side as the storage area, there is access to change rooms underneath the stairs leading to the foyer. On the opposite length of the court, there is the staff room that appears to be mainly used by the physical education staff. Although, I have not had access to it, I remember that the head of the physical education department also used rooms on the upper, behind the foyer.. There is also a toilet next door, but this is likely only used by the teachers. I used it to change into uniform during my teaching at the school.

On the upper level, the end at which the class rooms are located, is dominated by the school merit board, listing school captains, sports captains and so forth. I note that there is only room for about another 12 years of names, by which time a new merit board will be required and I wonder where that will be placed as wall space is limited. There are also framed photographs of different students and groups of students who have achieved different awards or wins. There is also limited space for more photographs. House flags and banners are draped over the sides of the railing that marks the outer limit of the upper level on two sides. The side on which the foyer and other rooms are located is completely walled in, other than space for the stairs and windows from two or three rooms looking down over the basketball court. There is a wide passageway immediately outside the classrooms, ending in the railing. Along the other length of the court (opposite the foyer), gym equipment is set out across a fairly narrow passageway. There are the usual types of equipment eg resistance machines, stationary bikes, weights, but also gym balls and two speed balls attached to the wall.

The foyer runs the length of the basketball court. I remember but had not had opportunity to look at on this occasion, that there is a small theatre complex at the furthest end, with kiosk and toilet facilities. I used the foyer on several occasions when I taught at the school, generally for year 12 students. Space is fairly limited for some activities as it is fairly narrow, although generally we could use the length of the foyer. It is very pleasant in the foyer as the windows face north and on one end, there are windows on three sides. The basketball court however is usually quite cold.

When I arrive, there are several classes apparently about to have some form of phys ed. I am not sure which group is supposed to have self defence so I wait until some groups have moved either outside or are obviously doing another activity and approach the teacher concerned. I introduce myself . The female teacher has been told that I will be attending the classes. The self defence instructor has not arrived yet.

... The gym is being used by three different groups. The court is divided in half by a drop screen. Two other groups occupy one half, while the self defence class occupies the other. The gym is fairly cold but reasonably comfortable on a chilly day. This year level has 7 classes. I know from experience that it is not unusual to have 3 or more different classes from all levels of the school taking part at different physical education activities at the same time. The gym/basketball court can be sectioned off by drop sheets.

The noise level is quite distracting and as I am seated on a bench at the edge of the court, it is difficult to hear everything that the instructor is saying. While I can see most of the class, they are practising some 10-15 feet away. I do not feel it would appropriate to move around the students as they practise but it would have been beneficial. I do move in closer however when the instructor gathers the group together to have a talk later in the class.

This group of girls also has a good relationship with their teacher, who later actively participates in the class, by partnering the odd girl out to make 10 pairs and also to help in demonstrations.

The noise from the other two groups tends to dominate the gym and it is often difficult to hear what the instructor is saying unless within close range. This is a necessary evil for the school as they have a comprehensive sports programme and facilities are in high demand. Outside, at least 5 other classes are participating in other activities on the tennis courts and on the oval.

The class starts out with a warm up- running up and down the width of the court and then touching the ground at every second step. I get the impression that this is more to get them warm than to 'warm up' for the activities. This impression is confirmed later as the techniques practices don't involve much physical exertion.

The class seems to respond well to the instructor, who is young and male. He appears to have developed an easy relationship with the girls and he has a friendly, easy going approach. This group appears to be quite friendly on the whole. The girls laugh and appear to enjoy this warm up component.

## **Appendix D      Interview guide**

- How would you describe yourself?
- How would you describe girls?
- How would you describe boys?
- How do you feel about sport?
- How do you think girls play sport?
- How do you think boys play sport?
- What are your thoughts about self-defence?
- Who needs self defence training?
- When do you think you might need self defence?
- What do you think about when you think about self-defence?
- Tell me about the self defence course
- What did you learn?
- What do you think you might do if you were attacked?
- What do you think you might do if you were with someone else?
- What do you think you might do if an attacker had a weapon of some kind?
- How do you feel about these things now you have learned some self defence?

